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AND

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BY

MARTHA JAMES

Author of "My Friend Jim," "Tom Winstone, 'Wide Awake,'"  
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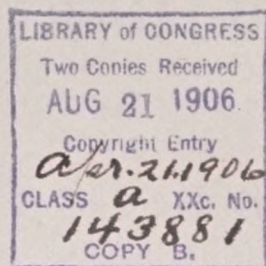
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# JIMMIE SUTER

## CHAPTER I

### A PIECE OF NEWS

"THREE weeks more and Christmas!" thought Jimmie, as he sat up in bed and looked about him.

It was very evident that Jack Frost had been busy during the night. He had stolen into the little room and touched the basin of water that stood on a small table, leaving a thin coating of ice. He had hovered over Jimmie and Tod fast asleep in bed, but they were tucked in so snugly with blankets and warm quilts that he knew he couldn't touch them so he had slipped away after breathing gently on the window panes just to let Jimmie know that he had been around. He had traced flowers and trees and glimpses of great castles there, and over all he had made beautiful touches of things that grow.

Jimmie glanced at Tod still fast asleep, his

little nose buried in the soft pillow, then he slid softly out of bed and jumped into his clothes as quickly as a boy can. He ran to the window and made a little place to look out. What a sight greeted his eyes! The night before, as he put his feet down gingerly on the cold sheets, he had seen the moon smiling down on a brown hill and bare trees, but this morning the scene outside looked like a new country.

Everything was snow-covered, white and glistening, and the trees were all Christmas trees. What a beautiful world it was!

Jimmie turned from the window and stood for a second looking at the basin of water. It required a little courage to wash in ice-water, but our hero was a sturdy country boy and it wasn't the first time he had seen a coating of ice in his wash basin, so he "put in his thumb and pulled out a"—piece of ice. Phew! it felt cold; and his face was nice and warm, besides it wasn't really dirty. He was half tempted to let it go unwashed, when like a flash came the thought "afraid of a little cold water!" He ducked his head, dashed the cold water into his



face and eyes, finished his bath, and after a vigorous rubbing felt clean, wide awake, and ready for anything.

On the way down stairs he whistled a lively tune and burst into the kitchen with a hearty "Good-morning, everybody." His mother, bending over the stove, turned with a pleasant greeting and pointed out of doors.

"Did you look out of your window this morning, Jim?"

"Yes, mother; isn't it jolly to have snow at last? There'll be good coasting now. What fun I mean to have and only three weeks more till Christmas!—three weeks, twenty-one days, let's see how many hours, twenty-four hours in a day and twenty-one days. Twenty times twenty-four is four hundred and eighty and one day more, let's see, four hundred and eighty plus twenty is five hundred, and four is five hundred and four. Hurray! five hundred and four hours more."

When Jim had finished his mental arithmetic his mother's smile deepened as she said: "I didn't mean the snow exactly. Didn't you

notice anything unusual in the big house this morning? ”

For answer, Jim made a dive to the window, on which the frost had melted from the heat of the kitchen stove, and looked eagerly across the way.

“ Why! there’s smoke coming out of the chimney! Somebody is shoveling off the piazza. It looks like father. What does it mean? Are the folks there? Did Rand come? ”

“ Wait a moment,” said his mother, raising one hand in smiling protest against this volley of questions. “ If you listen a moment I’ll tell you all I know about it and then one question at a time, if you please. Your father got word from Mr. Cotter to start the fires in the house and have it thoroughly aired, sunned and heated, every day this week. That is all I know about it.”

“ Do you suppose they are really coming back to Sunnyview? ” asked the boy eagerly.

“ Well, it certainly looks as if someone might come. Perhaps they are going to spend Christmas here.”



Jimmie gave such a war-whoop at his mother's words that the brown, curly dog under the table jumped with a bark of joy, as if he anticipated great times.

"Now, Jimmie, run to the door and call father. Breakfast is ready and there is a busy day before him."

After breakfast Jimmie had to shovel a path to the woodshed and fill the woodbox near the kitchen stove. This and several other chores kept him busy till school time. He had more than a mile to walk to school, but the snow was not very deep and when about half way he met a farmer, driving in his sleigh, on the way to town. Jimmie was invited to jump in, and he reached the schoolhouse in time to help half a dozen boys make an immense snowball before the bell rang.

I am afraid Jimmie's thoughts wandered many times during the school hours. In the reading lesson, visions of good times would crowd themselves before the boy's mind no matter how hard he tried to think of his book. Indeed I am not at all sure that he tried very hard

to think of books.' His thoughts were busy with schemes to have some rare sport if Rand came to Sunnyview for Christmas. He was just in the midst of planning to make a fine double runner if Rand had a sled, when suddenly his name was called and he had to stand and admit before the whole class that he had lost his place. Jimmie's face turned red and he felt very much ashamed. It was the first time in his life that he had ever been so stupid. It was provoking too, because he knew he would have to stay after school, and it was just the day he wanted to get home early.

When Miss Drew said in her brisk, cheery voice, "Why, Jimmie, I am very much surprised," he felt his face grow hot and he wished more than ever that he had attended to his lesson.

Shad Wilber, who sat opposite, slid down behind his reader so that the teacher could not see him and whispered: "Ha, ha! teacher's pet caught at last." Jimmie heard the taunt and it did not make him feel any happier. In fact it made him very angry. To be called "teacher's



pet" was almost as bad in Jimmie's eyes as it would be to be called "sissy." Not that our hero did not like his teacher. He was really very fond of Miss Drew and thought much of her good opinion, but there never was a really manly boy at Jimmie's age who liked to be known as "teacher's pet," and he resented it to such an extent that he glared across the aisle at Shad Wilber, and then never raised his eyes from the reading-book before him till the lesson was over.

Shad Wilber was the only boy in school who did not like Jimmie Suter. Everybody knew the reason. At one time Shad had set a bulldog to kill a cat and Jimmie had held the dog, until the cat got away safely, then he had had a quarrel with the cowardly Shad, and given him a few punches and promised many more if he again caught him at his cruel sport.

Shad was sly, tricky, and did not tell the truth. Jimmie, frank and open in all his dealings, honest, and a lover of fair play, had nothing in common with a boy like Shad and felt a certain contempt for his mean traits.



Shad Wilber felt this keenly at times and he hated Jimmie accordingly. He was also jealous of our hero, because he was a leader among the boys.

You may be very sure Shad was pleased because Jim had to stay after school. But the longest hour after school must end, and when Jimmie had made up his lesson and received a bit of admonition from the bright little teacher, he felt better, and when outside he fairly flew over the road that took him home.

When Jimmie Suter arrived at the house he made straight for the woodshed. A corner of it, containing a bench and his tool chest, had been set apart for his own special use, for Jimmie was very clever with his tools and at this time was busy making something for his little brother, Tod, for a Christmas present. He had decided to make a rocking horse, an original one in which Tod would have to be his own horse. He had fashioned two long rockers from a board given him by his father, and had whittled and planed them down until they suited his purpose. Then he had procured some barrel staves, sawed

them into thirds, and taking the middle part of each stave had nailed it securely on the rockers.

When it was finished, he intended to paint it red and attach reins to holes bored in the rockers. Little Tod could sit on a small seat, hold the reins and play horse to his heart's content.

Jimmie had only a few minutes to work on the toy, as there were a great many chores to be done, and he didn't want Tod to catch a glimpse of it till Christmas morning.

When he heard Duke, the brown dog, barking, he suspected that Tod was near at hand, so he put up his tools and hurried out of the shed, taking care to bolt the door in order to keep out his inquisitive little brother.

"Did you hear anything more about Rand's folks coming here?" asked Jimmie, when he walked into the kitchen to find his mother sitting at the window braiding mats, and Tod and the baby gurgling with delight over the soap bubbles they were blowing.

"No, Jimmie, but I went over there to-day and looked through the house. I wouldn't be



surprised to hear something from the house-keeper in a day or two."

"Did they ever spend Christmas here before?" asked Jimmie.

"Not in my time, but I have heard that a long time ago, before Rand was born, when his mother was alive and well, there was a great house party there one Christmas season, and for weeks there was sleighing and skating and outdoor sports every day and music and merrymaking at night.

"Mrs. MacLeod, she was Alice Fish then, told me that one night there was a great party and all the ladies had their hair powdered and rolled up high in great puffs and wore old-fashioned petticoats of quilted satin, with bodices and high-heeled shoes, and the men wore wigs and satin coats with lace on their sleeves and buckles on their shoes, and they danced in the great hall up there with slow, stately measure and low bows and much courtesying, and she never saw anything half so pretty. But all that, you know, was in the old house."

"Why, I never knew there was any other house there," said Jim.



"Oh, yes indeed, there was a much larger house in those days and a great stable filled with horses; but there was a fire one night and it was completely destroyed. For years there was nothing there but the ruins of the mansion. Mr. Cotter went abroad, when his wife died, and remained away for years. In the meantime your father bought this land and built our cottage. Then one day Rand's father came back and the present house was built there, and every summer they came and brought Rand, a delicate little boy a year older than you."

"But Rand never saw Sunnyview in winter did he, mother?"

"No, I think not."

"Oh, I just hope he comes. We've had jolly good times in the past few summers, but I'd show him what fun is if he'd come here in winter."

Jimmie would have talked on for an hour, if his mother had listened, but she had to put aside her mats and prepare supper, leaving Jimmie with a head full of great schemes for the future.

## CHAPTER II

### PLANNING AN ICE-BOAT

JIMMIE was working away on Tod's Christmas present the following day, when he heard his father calling him.

"There's a letter in the post office for you," said his father, when Jimmie appeared at the door. "It's been there two days, so Alec MacLeod tells me. If I had had the time I would have called there; as it is, I am afraid you'll have to wait till to-morrow."

Jimmie was disappointed when he learned that he would have to wait a whole day for the letter, but he said cheerfully: "It must be from Rand Cotter, telling me about his coming to Sunnyview, don't you think so, father?"

"Yes, likely. I think he's coming here for the holidays and you'll have plenty of snow if I'm a weather prophet," he added, looking at the masses of snow-clouds overhead.



Jimmie went back to his work bench and began to bore the holes in the rocker, but his mind was occupied with the thoughts of the letter and the news it might contain.

He had never received a letter through the mails but once before in his life. The occasion came back vividly as he bent over his work. He would never forget that event because it was then that he had received his treasured tool chest.

He remembered every particular of the affair, as if it had all happened the day before, and still it was when he was a very small boy that Miss Winn, his Sunday-school teacher, had said to the boys one morning, just before the Sunday-school was dismissed:

“I think we have the kindest and best Santa Claus in the world in our little church, and this Christmas he wants to be sure to get the right things for his boys and girls, so he told me to ask you all to write him a letter, in which each boy may tell what he would like to have more than anything else in the world.”

Well, that was a happy Christmas! Jimmie had written that he wanted a tool chest, a fine one

that he could make "real, truly things with," and not only had he received his splendid tool chest, but the nicest letter from Santa Claus and it came through the mail, just the way grown folks get their letters. His mother had kept the letter carefully in a little box, so that he would always have it.

He had not wholly understood it at the time, but his mother had explained it to him and he had shown it, at her suggestion, to Miss Winn, who liked it so well that she had read it to all the boys in her class and had talked it over with them.

Perhaps I had better reproduce it, or at least a part of it, so that you may know about it too.

"I am glad, Jimmie," so the letter ran, "that one of my boys would like to have a tool chest. It is a good thing for any boy to own and I hope you will plan and build many fine things—boxes and tables and toy houses, but all the time I want you to build something else of far greater value than these, the most important task in the world for you.

"It is called *character*, Jimmie. It is some-



thing that every one of us begins to build in childhood. You can destroy the tables and chairs and houses, no matter how strongly you may put them together, but if this great thing called character is builded well, you cannot destroy it, so you see how important it is to start it right.

“You will need in this character-building first of all, honesty. Have it in every corner, use it all the time. It will make your house, that is your character, so strong that nothing can destroy it.”

Well, there was a little more, but that was the way the letter read, and although Jimmie was only a little fellow at the time, he thought about it. All boys want to become strong and great and if honesty is going to make them so, they are bound to be honest and I feel very sure that courage, perseverance, industry and success will follow as naturally as the great rivers flow to the sea.

The holes in the runners were made at last to Jimmie's satisfaction. He had now only to paint it and attach the reins, that his mother

was knitting in the long evenings, when little Tod was safely tucked away in bed.

In a short time Jimmie put aside his work and went out for a coast down Sunset Hill, still thinking of the good times ahead if Rand Cotter came to the big white house for Christmas.

Rand and Jimmie had known each other for many years and although they met only in the summer vacations, they had become great friends.

It was true that Rand was the son of a rich man, lived in a fine house, went to a private school in Boston, and had every wish gratified. Jimmie's father was a carpenter, and a good one, too. He owned his cottage and had something laid by for a rainy day, and did not owe anybody in the world. Jimmie went to a little country school with a score of other boys as poor as himself. Did I call Jimmie poor? That was a slip, because Jimmie was rich, with the countless riches of youth and health, of a fine mind in a vigorous body; and as both Rand and Jimmie were brave, manly, and honest, they met on equal terms.



As Jimmie enjoyed the coasting down the hill that day he made up his mind to do a great many things in the weeks following. Perhaps there would be good skating, a sport that he always enjoyed.

Sometimes, in the winter, after a severe rain-storm, the marsh brook overflowed its banks and then if a cold night came, it made an immense tract of ice.

During the summer Jimmie went canoeing in the marsh brook, in a fine canoe, that he had made out of cheese-boxes.

There would be no more sailing now till the warm weather, unless—and the idea flashed all at once into his mind—he sailed in an ice-boat!

Wouldn't it be great sport to make an ice-boat, and he felt that he could do it, too! In a second he was busy planning out the whole affair.

To have an ice-boat that would spin over the marsh brook, when it was like a sheet of glass, would be rare sport indeed! In the first place Jimmie decided that he would have to get a boat;

any old flat-bottomed boat would answer his purpose; but the next question was where could he get such a boat, or for that matter, where and how could he procure a boat at all? There was not such a thing at Sunnyview; nobody he knew owned a boat of any description.

But get a boat he would, and with this determination Jimmie reached the top of Sunset Hill for his last coast.

After taking a short run, he threw himself forward on the sled, his hand on the runners, and went flying down the hill over a couple of "thank-you ma'ams" that he had made the day before.

He took short coasts almost to his door and went inside, the subject of the ice-boat still uppermost in his mind.

That evening after supper, just as his father started to read the newspaper, Jim said:

"Do you know anybody who owns an old boat, father?"

"A boat," repeated the man, shaking his head, "I don't think there are any boats about here, unless Ben Ridgeway, up the lake, has one."



"Why! so he has," cried Jim, "I never thought of him. I wonder if he'd sell."

"Are you thinking of buying a boat?" asked John Suter, looking at his boy with a smile and opening the newspaper.

"I'd like to get one, father; I'm thinking of making an ice-boat and he might sell me an old one that would be just the thing. I have thirty-seven cents in my bank and of course he couldn't charge very much for an old boat."

"Well, Jimmie," and his father's smile deepened, "I don't know how many boats Ben Ridgeway has in his possession or how old they may be, but you may be certain that he would not sell one for thirty-seven cents."

"How much do you suppose he'd ask for a boat, father?"

"Why, that I can't tell. A good boat is worth something, and a very poor one isn't worth much."

"But, father, a very old one would suit me. I could go over it and make it strong, you know."

"Well, Jimmie, he may have one up there that is crumbling to ruin, but Ben never makes

a poor bargain. He'd get every cent that the thing was worth, and a great deal more."

"He might sell one for half a dollar—I'd only need thirteen cents more, if he did," ventured Jimmie, looking at his father hopefully.

"Oh, I'll give you the thirteen to make the fifty," laughed the man, "but I doubt you'll get a boat for it."

In spite of the foregoing conversation, which was not very encouraging, Jimmie made up his mind to see Ben Ridgeway just as soon as he possibly could.



## CHAPTER III

### A BID FOR A BOAT

“ANOTHER day, clear and bright, one day nearer Christmas and, perhaps, a day nearer Rand Cotter!” This thought came to Jimmie as he jumped out of bed the following morning and looked at the big white house.

He hurried through his work that morning and started a half-hour earlier than usual for school, because he had to go to the post office to get his letter.

When he arrived there, he ran quickly up the steps, but when once inside the door and standing before the window, our hero hesitated. All his bashfulness (and on certain occasions Jimmie Suter was very bashful) swept over him, like the warm color that suffused his brown, freckled face.

It might have been caused by the appearance

of Minnie Day and Susie Hibbard, two of the largest girls in Jimmie's school, who stood near him munching candy, and when the postmistress looked over her glasses at Jimmie and said: "Mail?" they tittered right out loud, making Jimmie's brown cheeks redder than ever.

"Is there a letter for me, Jimmie Suter, if you please?" he asked, blushing furiously.

"Mr. James Suter," said the postmistress, passing over the letter with a smile, while Minnie and Susie buried their faces in their handkerchiefs, quite overcome with mirth. Jimmie felt at that moment that he just hated girls; they were always giggling at something; but he hurried out of the post office, his precious letter clasped in his hand. At the first corner, safe from interruption, he looked it over, on the outside. It was really so exciting to get a letter with his name and address beautifully written, that he lingered over that envelope for the shade of a second; then he hastily tore it open and read as follows:



"DEAR JIMMIE:

"Here's a piece of news for you. I am coming to Sunnyview for Christmas, so be on the lookout for me sometime next week. I have not been very well this winter and the doctor told my father to take me out of school till the Spring.

"You would think that a piece of luck, I know, but I am a little disappointed, as the boys had just made me captain of the football team.

"Well, hurrah for Sunnyview and the marsh brook and the pine woods and little Tod and Duke and Jimmie Suter!

"We can't sail our canoe, can we, but we'll coast down Sunset Hill and plan no end of fun.

"Yours for a jolly good time,

"RAND COTTER."

Jimmie placed the letter carefully in the envelope and put it in his pocket. What a surprise he would give Rand! They could not sail in their canoe but they *could* go flying over the marsh brook in an ice-boat.

Jimmie went on his way to school with quick steps, but his mind was swifter than his feet, for in an incredibly short time he had the ice-boat in a magnificent state of completion, had launched it on the marsh and was taking flying trips, himself the captain and Rand Cotter first mate. All this you understand was accomplished in his mind before the bell rang for school.

It was strange how that ice-boat would crowd itself into everything that morning. Even in the arithmetic lesson when Jimmie tried to subtract seven thousand, eight hundred and sixteen from nine thousand, six hundred and four, Jimmie wrote out the figures 9604—7816 and started out by saying, "six from four leaves two," truly a remarkable statement and yet *not* so remarkable when you consider that the picture of a magnificent ice-boat had wedged itself right between Jimmie Suter's eyes and those figures.

Our hero had received permission from his mother to pay a visit to Ben Ridgeway when school was over that day, so he did not take his usual course but went through the village till he



struck the road that led directly to the lake and the old man's place.

Ben's place (he was commonly called Old Ben by the townspeople) consisted of a fair-sized barn and several shanties, on the borders of the lake.

In one of these the old man lived quite alone, the others were used in his extensive hen and duck business. He also had a number of pigeons, among them some noted tumblers, in the loft of the barn.

Every year he raised hundreds of chickens and ducks for market and sold quantities of eggs. In spite of an apparently thriving business, Ben was looked upon as a poor old man, though sharp and shrewd in his dealings with others.

When Jimmie came within sight of the lake, he looked eagerly for a glimpse of a boat, and as he drew nearer saw one tied to a small landing. It looked rather old and the boy's spirits rose as he thought of the possible bargain that would make him the owner.

So intent was his gaze that he never saw Ben

Ridgeway approaching, till the latter said in a loud voice:

"Hello, Sonny, ain't yer lost up here?"

"No, sir," laughed Jimmie, "I came up here to see you."

"I want ter know! Well, I reckon yer didn't come fer nothin'."

"I came to see if you had an old boat you'd like to sell."

"Oh, that's it, is it," said the man, eyeing Jimmie shrewdly; "jest walk over to the house and when we're inside we'll talk it over."

"Ain't it a queer time ter come buyin' a boat?" asked Ben, when they were both seated in the narrow kitchen, before a good warm fire.

"Not for my purpose," said Jimmie, smiling. "You see, I want to make an ice-boat and I thought if you had an old 'flat-bottom' boat that you didn't need I might be able to buy it."

"An' how in kingdom are you goin' ter make an ice-boat outer an old flat-bottom tub, I'd like ter know."

"Oh, it's easy enough, sir, I shall put on runners, hoist a sail, and have something to steer it.



That's about the plan. Of course I may think of something better as I go along with it."

"Ye're a smart boy, Jimmie," said the man after a pause, "an' better nor that ye're a good boy, yer never come up here with Shad Wilber an' his crowd a-peltin' stones at my ducks.

"Shad Wilber!" repeated the old man, his face growing dark with anger, and he shook his fist. "If ever I catch that rascal, I'll fix him! I'll have the law on him yet. I thought to have the law on him last summer, when he lamed my finest geese, but he sneaked out of it, but I'll get him yet."

Ben sat with bowed head, and a silence, broken only by the ticking of an old-fashioned clock on the mantel piece, followed this outbreak. At last the man raised his head and looked steadily at his visitor.

"I have a flat-bottom boat, not a very old one either—jest the thing yer want, an' I'll let yer have it."

Jimmie's heart bounded at the news, but it sank again when the old man added:

"Fer two dollars, Jimmie, that boat is yours."

"Oh, I couldn't pay as much as that, sir," cried the boy.

"But it's a fine boat, lad, an' think o' the good times you'll have when you've fixed it all up with them runners that yer told about. Why! it's a bargain, a rare piece o' luck, yer won't get the like on it in Sunnyview."

"Could I see the boat?" asked Jimmie, who did not want to repeat that he could not pay the price asked.

The old man arose slowly and opened the door.

"It's out back here," he said, leading the way out of the kitchen and past the shanties to a sort of lumber yard where in the midst of broken hen-coops and odd pieces of timber Jimmie spied an old boat, with the bottom half gone.

"You don't mean two dollars for that old boat, do you?" said Jim, whose courage went up when he saw it.

"It's not as old as it looks, boy, there's only a board or two missin'; you could fix that in half an hour—half an hour, yes, in fifteen minutes a smart boy like you could make it look like a new boat."



"Well, sir," said Jimmie, with evident disappointment, "I couldn't possibly pay two dollars for it, nor even a dollar, so there's no use in staying any longer."

He turned to go, but the man, eager to sell the old boat, which he knew was not worth a quarter of the price he asked, placed a hand on Jimmie's shoulder.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, seein' it's you an' you're sech a good boy. I'll let you have the boat for a dollar and a quarter—now don't tell me that yer can't pay that," he added, as Jimmie shook his head; "any smart boy like you can earn a dollar and a quarter in no time. Go home and think it over, lad, think it over and come up here again when you've got the money."

"I've got just thirty-seven cents, sir, but my father would give me thirteen more to make fifty and I'm sure that is all I could pay," returned Jimmie, starting to walk away.

"Think it over, lad, think it over," repeated Ben, "it's the only boat you can get for love or money anywheres about here. It's cheap, it's very cheap, Jimmie, an' you're a big, strong boy,

you can easily make up the dollar and a quarter, think it over, think it over——”

They had reached the door of Ben Ridgeway's habitation and while the old man stood there, peering at Jimmie from under his bushy eyebrows, a smile on his weather-beaten face, our hero raised his cap and started for home.



## CHAPTER IV

### HONEST WORK AND ANOTHER KIND

ALL the way home Jim thought hard about the boat. It was just what he wanted. He could fix it up to look like a new boat, but the money to buy it, that was the rub!

Fifty cents was all he could afford to pay for it, and deep down in his heart he felt that that was quite enough for the old boat. Still if he only had the seventy-five more he knew that he would buy it.

A dollar and a quarter! It was really not so much after all, and yet to a boy who only got a few pennies now and then it was quite a sum of money.

Suddenly the old man's suggestion flashed into his mind. Why could he not earn seventy-five cents? He began to ask himself what he could do to earn some money.

He was certainly able to chop wood, run errands, shovel snow, do anything in fact that a boy could do. He did not know anybody who wanted a boy for any special work, but he determined to make inquiries. A better plan than that, however, suggested itself to Jimmie that very night, as he sat at the kitchen table whittling a long stick that was going to be used in making an original whip for brother Tod's home-made rocking horse.

He decided to put up a notice in the post office. A great many people passed in and out during the day and it would be sure to catch somebody's eye; reasoned Jim. He put away the stick he was whittling, procured pen, ink, and paper and began to write. The simplest and most direct way always appealed to Jimmie, so he wrote in a large, boyish hand the following:

"A strong boy wants any kind of work after school hours and on Saturdays."

Then he wrote his name and address and held the paper at arm's length to see how it looked.

He passed it to his father and mother, who had already heard the plan and approved it.



The next morning Jimmie put up the notice in the post office and went on his way rejoicing.

More snow fell that night and our hero had visions of shoveling snow and in this way earning ten or fifteen cents to add to his precious fifty, but the snow did not bring him anything, except perhaps a bit of news that he heard the following day.

“Talk about fun,” said Hank Allen; “Shad Wilber and a lot of us saw Ben Ridgeway coming down Cedar Road in his old pung. We just laid for him behind the stone wall and when he passed, we plugged the old nag he was driving and that pung with snow balls till you couldn’t see. He was furious. Whew! you ought to ’a’ seen him jump down and run for us with his whip, but we scooted for all we were worth, with our caps pulled down so he wouldn’t know us. He shook his fist and hollered. I tell you what, didn’t we laugh! Shad let him have a snowball on the hat. Oh, Jimmie, you ought to have been there!”

“If I had been there I’d have punched Shad

Wilber, and you can tell him I said so if you want; it's just like that sneak to do something mean and then run away."

"Why! what was mean about it?" asked Hank, surprised at Jimmie's outburst.

"Don't you call it mean to plague an old man and throw snowballs at him? Would you like Shad Wilber and those fellows to lie in wait for *your* father and pelt him like that? Well I guess you wouldn't!" cried Jimmie in boyish indignation.

"Well, I don't think any of the boys meant to hit the old man, they just threw the snowballs at the rig, you know—wanted some sport with the old nag."

"Pretty mean sport, I call it," returned Jimmie, and just then the bell rang and our hero dismissed the matter from his mind.

On his way home from school that day Jimmie met George Marron, who had a large milk route in the town.

"Hello, Jimmie," said the man, "I've just been up to your house. I read your notice in the post office last night and, as my boy, Joe, is laid



up, I thought you could help me out for a few days."

Jimmie's heart bounded at the news. "I'd be glad to," he said, "when do you want me to begin?"

"To-morrow morning. I've talked it over with your mother and she says you can get up good an' early without any trouble. I'm glad you're an early riser; we have to start things long 'fore daylight, you know."

"What time shall I be over to your place?" asked Jimmie.

"Five o'clock 'll be time enough, this time o' year; you see we don't git 'round so early in winter as we do in summer. We start out about six and you'll be all through by half-past eight, giving you plenty of time for school."

"All right," said Jimmie, "I'll be there." And he hurried homeward over the white fields, delighted at his good fortune in securing some work. The ice-boat seemed more real than ever.

The next morning when everything was black as midnight and the old clock in the kitchen was striking four, Jimmie arose, made a hasty

toilet, and went softly down stairs so as not to awaken the other members of the house.

In the kitchen he found the lantern that his father had placed there for him all ready to use. He struck a match, lit the lantern, then drawing on his overshoes, putting on his thick coat, and pulling his cap over his ears, he started out, lantern in hand, in the crisp air and the darkness.

Jimmie had a pretty good journey before him, but he reached George Marron's farm at quarter before five and worked every minute of the time until he jumped off the team in front of the schoolhouse at twenty minutes before nine.

Our hero was very happy at the prospect of earning some money, and thus be in a position to buy Ben Ridgeway's boat. He figured it all out in his mind and came to the conclusion that he would earn a great deal more than the seventy-five cents necessary to close the bargain.

But Jimmie was a little too hasty in his calculations, as he found out later when Mr. Marron called at his house that night and told him that his boy, Joe, was better and going to resume work the next morning.



"But you did first-rate for a green hand," said the man, passing a half-dollar to Jimmie, "and if ever I want help, I'll call on you. Next time it will probably be more."

"Thank you," said Jimmie, putting the well-earned fifty cents in his pocket.

Of course our hero was disappointed that he could not have worked a little longer and thus have earned more; still he felt very happy over the thought that he now had one dollar all his own, and only needed twenty-five cents more to make the sum required to buy the boat.

When another whole day and then another passed without bringing an opportunity to earn anything, Jimmie's stock of patience fell pretty low. He wanted to begin at once on the ice-boat, in order to have it finished before Rand Cotter came to Sunnyview for Christmas; and of course he could not do anything till he had the boat from Ben Ridgeway. If he could only buy the boat for a dollar, he could begin at once.

Suddenly the thought came to him to make another effort to buy it and offer the dollar. "Perhaps when Ben sees the cash," thought

Jimmie, "he'll be willing to sell the boat for that sum."

With the firm determination to get it, if he possibly could, he started for Ben's place, after school that day, his precious dollar rolled up in a handkerchief, safe in his inside pocket.

He met the old man, nearly a quarter of a mile from his shanty, cutting down brush and dead branches, near the woods.

"Oh, it's you, is it," said Ben, by way of greeting, and then proceeded with his work.

"Mr. Ridgeway," said Jimmie, the color deepening in his cheeks, "I have one dollar, and I came up here to-day to see if you'd sell that boat for it."

"No, I won't," said the old man testily. "I told yer the other day my terms was one dollar and twenty-five an' I mean to stick to it."

Jimmie was silent a moment, while the old man stopped his work and eyed the boy narrowly.

Jimmie returned his gaze and it struck him all at once that Ben seemed provoked about something. The lines on his weather-beaten face



were deeper than ever and the tones of his voice harsh and irritable.

"Yer only hed thirty-seven cents when yer was up here the other day, how'd yer get the rest of it?" he asked sharply.

"My father gave me thirteen, that made fifty, and I earned the other fifty by working for Mr. Marron one morning when his boy, Joe, was sick."

The old man's face softened as Jimmie's words fell upon his ears, and he regarded the boy with something like approval.

"Well, Jimmie, you're a pretty honest boy, I guess, an' now I'll tell yer somethin'. How'd yer like to do something fer me an' I'll pay you a quarter for it—that's all you need ter get the boat. It's easy work too, no trouble nor nothin'."

"All right, sir," said Jimmie, "when do you want it done?"

"You can take your own time about it, still I don't know but what the sooner the better. Mebbe you couldn't do it all at once. You'll have to be careful and git every one."

In his eagerness to earn the twenty-five cents Jim had never questioned the work Ben Ridgeway wished him to perform. All at once his curiosity came to the fore and he said:

“What do you wish me to do, sir?”

The old man's face beamed for a minute, as he looked at the boy. He dropped his ax and came a step nearer.

“I want yer to get a list of names for me, that's easy, ain't it?”

“I don't understand what you mean,” said Jimmie, puzzled at the old man's words and manner.

“I'll tell yer, Jimmie. I was coming' down Cedar Road the other day, when a crowd o' them hoodlum raskils, that lamed my geese last summer, threw snowballs at me. They ran when I went after them and I can't find out who they were, but I'll find out yet an' I'll have the law on 'em. I'll fix 'em yet.” The old man's voice trembled with anger and he shook his finger.

He seemed to forget Jimmie's presence and raved and swore against the mischief-makers.



After several minutes he calmed down and said to the lad, who stood there looking on in amazement at this unexpected outburst:

“You’re the one that can get the names of every one for me, but you must be sly about it. Don’t let ’em know that ye’re findin’ out fer me. Even if yer can get one or two names that’s all I want. I’ll fix ’em! I’ll teach them to throw snowballs! An’ they’ll wish, aye an’ their good-fer-nothin’ fathers ’ll wish they’d let me alone.”

Again Ben flew into a rage and muttered threats against his enemies, while Jimmie stood there in silence, disappointment visible on every feature.

He wanted the boat that Ben had to sell more than anything else in the world, just at that moment, and he had jumped at the chance to do something for the man that would earn for himself the money necessary to complete the sum; but when he learned the nature of the work he was asked to perform, every fiber of his being shrank from the task.

It was mean, cowardly sport to plague an old man, and to throw a snowball at him was not

only cowardly but criminal; but Jimmie knew that most of the boys who had been in the party had acted thoughtlessly. Hank Allen, for instance, the very boy who had related the episode to him, was not a bad boy by any means.

The boys had thrown snowballs at the sleigh, as it went by, without any malice, and the matter would have ended there, very likely, if Shad Wilber had not had a hand in it.

But whether it was right or wrong, cowardly or otherwise, was not the question that troubled Jim. To go among the boys, find out just who were the guilty ones, and give their names to the old man, who was longing for revenge, would be the act of a sneak.

To be a tattletale, an informer, to take money for an underhand, sneaky act like that, the mere thought of it caused a feeling of shame and contempt to sweep over Jimmie Suter, but he only stood there as if dumb, while the old man went on:

“Now you jest get that list o’ names an’ bring it to me; I’ll put a quarter to thet dollar an’ the boat is yours.”





“What—not git a few names fer me?”—Page 43.





For a second Jimmie could not trust himself to speak, then he said quietly:

"I couldn't do that, sir, I didn't know you meant that kind of work."

"What!" cried Ben, his anger bursting out afresh, "you mean to tell me that you won't do what I jest asked yer—not git a few names fer me?"

"No, sir, I couldn't do that."

"Then yer aidin' an' abettin' them, ye're jest as much to blame as they are—consarn yer, yer young puppy, what der yer mean by comin' here an' defyin' me on my own ground?"

He stooped in the midst of his rage, and picking up the ax, shook it threateningly; but Jimmie, without waiting to hear more, took to his heels, and ran as if for dear life away from the scene.

## CHAPTER V

### SNOWBOUND

JIMMIE never stopped running till there was a good safe distance between himself and Ben. When he did slacken his speed to a brisk walk he looked back occasionally to see if the angry old man was in sight.

He was surprised and disappointed over the turn of affairs, but there was nothing to be done but make the best of it. He must give up all thoughts of buying the boat and think of some other plan.

It was too bad, though, when he had counted so on building a fine ice-boat and having it all ready before Rand Cotter came to Sunnyview.

It was supper time when Jimmie reached home, to find his father and mother waiting for him. Indeed his mother had become anxious and had gone to the door several times to see if she could catch a glimpse of Jimmie.



"You're late, Jimmie," said his father sternly.

Prompt to the letter in all his appointments, John Suter did not like tardiness in anybody. To be on time and never keep the meals waiting was an unwritten law in the little cottage.

"Yes, father," said the boy, hanging up his coat and cap, "I went to see Ben Ridgeway again this afternoon about the boat. I wanted to offer him a dollar, and I came home the long way through the woods."

"The long way," repeated the man; "what ever made you do that?"

Thereupon Jimmie related the whole story while they all sat down to supper.

"I was scared, father," said the boy, at the close of his narrative. "Ben couldn't speak, he got in such a rage; and when I saw him pick up the ax I just ran as fast as ever I could. I didn't stop to choose my road, but took the path through the woods. When I realized what I had done, I didn't like to go back and run the risk of passing him, so I just kept on."

"Now, keep away from him," said John Suter.

"Never have anything to say to him again about the boat."

"Poor old man," said Jimmie's mother, "I pity him from my heart. He lives up there all alone with no one to care for him, and I suppose it has made him hard and strange to other folks."

"It was a shame to throw snowballs at him," she added. "I wouldn't bother him any more, Jimmie, about the old boat. If ever you can do a good turn for him, do it—if not, keep out of his way."

That night when Jimmie Suter was warm in bed, he lay awake for some time making plans for the following week, but above all he thought of his cherished scheme to build an ice-boat. It was no wonder when he did fall asleep that he dreamt about it, and such a dream!

He was on a great, wide, frozen river in a small ice-boat. Rand Cotter sat in the bottom of the boat, tending the sail, and they were going at a terrific rate of speed. Houses and trees, and long stretches of country flew past them, as if it was an express train. Behind them was another ice-boat, ten times larger than theirs, filled



with Indians; and right at the rudder sat Ben Ridgeway. He was shouting to Jimmie to stop and was trying his best to overtake them; while every now and then a wild, painted Indian would jump high in the air and throw a tomahawk at them.

Never was a race so wildly exciting, as they flew over the frozen river, to which there seemed to be no end.

All at once, away off in the distance, Jimmie saw a great waterfall frozen into a solid mass of ice. Nearer and nearer his little ice-boat approached the ice-bound falls and he knew he must go over them. Behind him was Ben and the terrible Indians. He tried to shout to Rand Cotter to hold on tight to the sides of the ice-boat, as they went over the falls, with a drop of fifty feet. Then Jimmie awoke with a feeling that he had been trying very hard to make himself heard, so that he was quite out of breath from his dream experience.

But it was morning and such a morning! It had snowed all night and was still snowing fast. The back door was almost hidden by a

snowdrift, while only a glimpse of the tiny window was visible on the woodshed. It snowed all that day, and the last look Jimmie took out of his window at night showed a white wilderness.

“And when the second morning shone,  
He looked upon a world unknown,  
On nothing we could call our own;  
Around the glistening wonder bent  
The blue walls of the firmament;  
No cloud above, no earth below  
A universe of sky and snow.”

There was no prospect of going to school that day, or the next for that matter, and Jimmie was delighted.

After breakfast he started in to help his father shovel snow and they worked steadily until dinner time.

There was more of the same kind of work to be done in the afternoon, and by nightfall Jimmie's back and shoulders ached, but they had cleared away the great drifts and made a path to every necessary point.

As the roads were still unbroken Jimmie knew he would have to stay at home for the next few



days. He finished Tod's rocking horse, painted it a beautiful bright red, and put it aside to dry.

The whip that the little fellow could flourish over his head, while he rode on his fiery steed, was also painted.

Jimmie's mother had finished knitting the reins, and they had been put away until the paint was thoroughly dry.

Our little toy-maker found two small bells in an old box where all sorts of things were stowed away, and these he attached to the reins to make a merry jingle.

In the long evening he drew pictures of ice-boats and many other boats and toys. He heard his father and mother exchanging stories heard in their childhood—stories of the early settlers in a small Maine town, their horror of the Indians, their free, simple life and merrymaking.

One evening during the snowbound time Jimmie was idly drawing lines and curves on the paper before him, while his mother stood over a great pan of dough, kneading bread.

Jimmie watched his mother for a minute be-

fore it came to him that it was pretty hard work to toss and knead that mass of dough.

Now Jimmie, like all manly boys, believed that hard, manual labor ought to be done by his sex if possible. His father was busy, but his own hands were free, and his mother must be tired after the long day.

“Mother, let me knead that bread,” said Jimmie suddenly.

“You!” said his mother, with a smile; “but you never did it in your life.”

“Never mind, just let me try it once,” coaxed Jimmie, beginning to roll up his sleeves.

The woman did let him try and was very thankful to sit a few minutes and rest. She watched Jimmie’s strong arms kneading the bread, nor did the little sigh of relief that came from her, unconsciously, escape Jimmie’s quick ears.

Wasn’t it splendid of Jimmie Suter to do that for his mother? If I were a boy I would not only knead the bread when occasion demanded it, I would actually learn how to make bread.

Wouldn’t it be fine, boys, to know how to make



good bread and cook a few simple things well! If you camped out for a summer, how nice it would be to know about cooking; and suppose (I am only supposing, of course) that you were 'way out in a big mining country, living in a log hut, doing your own cooking.

Suppose circumstances arose that made it necessary to do your own cooking right at home. Think it over, boys. I think it's a good thing!

The next evening while Jimmie was busy, his mother read him a story that our hero liked very much. It was called "Blind Bill's Christmas," and as it is not very long I am going to tell it to you.

In the first place, you must know that Bill had not always been blind. For seven years after God had sent him to this "great, wide, beautiful, wonderful world" Bill could see as well as any boy who reads this story.

Then a terrible thing happened to the poor boy. One summer day he had climbed a butter-nut tree with some other boys; and, more fearless than wise, he had ventured out on a frail

limb that snapped in two and hurled him to the ground, twenty feet below.

Bill was in a big hospital for many months after his fall; and when he did come out one bright day, his sight had gone forever.

But for seven years, you know, he had seen perfectly well. I am very glad of this, because when the long days of darkness did come, he knew just how green was the grass, how blue the sky, and how beautiful the flowers!

Everybody pitied Bill. Sometimes when his mother looked into the sightless eyes of her boy, her own filled with tears; her heart ached as only a mother's heart can ache; and she cried from the depths of her sorrow, "O my poor boy! the pity of it, the pity of it."

But Bill never knew that his mother grieved for him, because her voice was always so cheery, and she told him such happy stories, that always ended beautifully, and she had so many bright ideas to help him through the long day.

Little Bennie was sorry, too! When the accident happened Bennie was only four years old, and he did not understand what it all meant.



He only knew that up to that time, he had had a big, strong brother to take him (who was only a little fellow) by the hand; but in the years that followed Bennie came to realize that this big brother must take his hand, that he, Little Ben, must look out for Bill.

It made him very tender and loving to the big, strong brother, who had to hold his chubby hand, when they went out to walk.

There wasn't anybody else in the family, unless Bennie included the two tame squirrels that lived in a near-by tree, and called in the most neighborly way every day on the back porch to have a crust of bread and a friendly chat.

One day a very important event happened in Bennie's life. The little brown cottage that he called home was sold and a few days after, they all went on a long ride in the steam cars that took them to the great, busy, crowded city, with rows of houses and stores and the highest buildings Bennie had ever seen.

Instead of in a dear little cottage, peeping out from vines and bushes, they went to live in a great, big tenement house.

It seemed very high and dark to little Bennie, as he followed his mother and Bill up the long, narrow stairs, and he said when they reached the tiny kitchen, "Are we going to live here always, mother?"

He wondered why his mother turned her face away and did not answer, and why the tears streamed down her cheeks. He felt very sad for a moment; but when she turned and kissed his dear, little round face, and said, with a smile:

"We are going to live here a long time, I hope, Ben; and it will be such a pretty, cozy place when we fix it all up. When you grow up to be big and strong, perhaps we can go back to the green fields and the brown cottage." Ben felt better after she said this, and he told himself he would try and grow very fast.

All this time, poor blind Bill walked slowly around the bare kitchen and the two little rooms adjoining, and tried to get acquainted with his new surroundings, by feeling his way and touching everything within reach.

In a short time Bennie liked his new home bet-



ter. His mother obtained employment to sew in a large store. Bennie went to school every day, and, when he returned, took brother Bill out for a walk in the fresh air.

Everything went along smoothly, until one cold morning in early December, Bennie's mother was taken sick and could not go to the big store to sew; and this was only the beginning of a long illness, when everything in the little tenement was very dreary, and Ben became a neglected, unhappy boy.

Brother Bill seldom went out during this sad time. He used to sit by his mother's bedside. He could bring her a drink of water and perform little tasks about the house by feeling his way.

The days crept on, until it was only a week before Christmas and it seemed to little Ben, as he walked past the gay windows and saw the busy crowds of people, that everybody in the world was getting ready for the great holiday but himself and Bill.

How his childish gaze rested on a beautiful Christmas scene, arranged in one of the shop windows!

He used to walk to that store every day and feast his eyes on the picture of a great toy Santa Claus, behind a Christmas tree, in the act of filling a row of stockings that hung from a mantel.

Sometimes he thought how fine it would be if he could buy a present for his mother and Bill; but his mother had whispered to him one morning, while Bill was asleep.

"Bennie, if you tell Bill about all the beautiful things you see in the stores, he will feel disappointed. You see we are very poor this Christmas, and I'm afraid Santa Claus will not come."

"Does Santa Claus only go to the rich, mother?" the little fellow had asked, wistfully, and his mother had sighed and kissed him; and Bennie did not ask any more questions, because, young as he was, he understood. He was very quiet in the house, after this little talk, and never told about the marvelous sights he saw every day, lest brother Bill should be sorely disappointed.

"There's only three days more," said Bennie



to himself, one day, as he pressed his face (it was thinner now and not so rosy as in former days) against the great plate glass window of the big store, to study anew the Christmas tree and the smiling Santa Claus. Suddenly, at his elbow, he heard a happy child's voice; and he turned to see a lovely little girl with red-gold curls.

"Oh, mamma," she cried, "do see that dear little workbox on the Christmas tree. Oh, I want one just like it!"

"You shall have it, dear, if we can buy it," said the woman at her side; and they started for the door of the shop, leaving Bennie standing in his accustomed place, gazing wistfully after them.

"Oh, if I could only buy a little present for Bill, I'd be happy," thought Bennie. "It's dreadful to think that Bill won't have any Christmas!" But presents were not for a little boy who had a sick mother, so Bennie decided, and, with one last look at the beautiful Christmas scene, he trudged homeward.

That night, however, he asked his mother if

she couldn't help him give Bill just a "teeny, weeny present, that would only cost a little."

His mother called him close to her bedside, while Bill was out of the room.

"Bennie, dear," she whispered, "mother is very poor this Christmas. The money that I had saved is almost gone. If it will only hold out until I am well enough to go back to work, everything will come out right; but we shall have to be very careful and not spend it for anything that we do not need. Don't you see, dear, I can not buy even a little present for Bill? Even if it were only five cents, dear, don't you see that five cents would buy a loaf of bread."

It was very hard for little Benny to realize all this, and when he said his prayers that night, he whispered fervently:

"O dear Lord, *I* do not need any present, but please, do please, send a little one to Bill."

Bennie did not go down to the big stores the next day, although he thought about them, and talked with his mother about the great toy Santa Claus, when Bill was not in the room.

The following afternoon, he could not keep



away any longer, and his little feet hurried over the pavements to the great window that displayed his favorite scene.

Again he pressed his little face against the glass and gazed at every detail of the picture. He knew by heart everything on the Christmas tree, from the big sled, resting near its base, to the gold star, shining on its topmost bough.

He had been staring such a long time at the beautiful things, that he never noticed it was getting dark. When he did turn from the window and looked about him, he was surprised to find the street lamps lighted.

Bennie decided to take one more look and hurry home when, just at that moment, a small dog gave a piteous little cry at his feet, and the next minute put up two little cold paws.

"Hello!" said Bennie, stooping to pat the little creature, which, thus caressed, wagged its tail and pressed closer to Bennie's faded trousers.

"I must go home," said Ben, starting to walk away, "and you must go home too." But the dog

followed close at his heels and refused to turn away.

Bennie looked around, to see if the owner was near, but no one seemed to pay any attention to the dog, which stood looking up at Bennie, with a dog's trusting, hopeful expression.

All at once, Bennie decided that the dog was lost or that, perhaps, no one wanted it. It might be one of the homeless dogs that appear now and then on the streets of the city. The boy's heart bounded at the thought. If no one wanted it, he might keep it, and better still, give it to Bill. He had heard Bill say one day that he would like to have a dog.

Suddenly a bright thought flashed into Bennie's head. He would give the little dog to Bill for Christmas. Bill would get a Christmas present after all!

Bennie walked rapidly, the little creature close at his heels. He planned to tell his mother that very night; but he must hide the dog somewhere, so that Bill would not see it till Christmas morning.

As luck would have it, the tenement across the



hall was vacant, and the rooms were not locked. He could keep the dog there safe from view.

Twice he stopped to pat his new acquaintance, and then hurried on faster than ever.

When he reached the big, dark tenement house, the little dog hesitated for the first time. Perhaps it was not the sort of place that he expected a winsome-faced child like Ben to lead him; be that as it may, his new master gathered him tenderly in his arms, and went softly up the long, narrow stairs.

When Bennie reached the third landing, he opened the door of the vacant tenement, put the dog gently on the floor of the kitchen, and closed the door.

Then he groped in the dark to his own door, and entered with a smiling face. Bill was going to have a Christmas present! He was just longing to tell his mother; but he did not have an opportunity till after supper, when Bill was busy in the kitchen.

That night Bennie shared his supper with the little dog and later he smuggled over an old shawl to put on the cold, bare floor for a bed.

When Ben was in his own little bed, he lay awake a long time and thought, with joy, that the next night was Christmas eve, and Bill would be so happy when he got his present.

In the morning Bennie could hardly wait to dress properly, so eager was he to have his mother see the dog, before Bill was up.

Bennie threw on his clothes and hurried across the hall, to the vacant rooms. On opening the door there stood his new acquaintance, up and ready, a knowing look on his intelligent face, the tail wagging harder than ever.

Bennie took the dog in his arms, and carried him to his mother's room, and she sat up in bed to look at the little creature.

"Why, Bennie, dear," said his mother, "this isn't a homeless dog. He has a collar on; he is a very handsome little fellow; and he looks as if he had been well cared for."

Then Bennie put the dog on the coverlet, and his mother patted the small head, while she examined the collar.

She turned it around on his neck, and all at once read softly:



"Felicity Dover, 185 Newbergh Ave."

Just then they heard Bill coming, so Bennie caught the dog up hastily, and hurried out of the room, and across the hall to the vacant kitchen.

He put his little friend on the shawl, and gazed with mingled feelings, disappointment plainly visible on the small face.

"Of course," Bennie reasoned, "since the dog wore a collar, with his name and address, he belongs to somebody." His thoughts were interrupted at this point by his mother's voice calling him, and he hurried back to her bedside.

"Bennie," said his mother, and she caught his little hand in her own, "I am sorry that you have been disappointed, but you can not keep the little dog. You know it belongs to somebody, so you must return it as soon as possible."

"I don't see why I couldn't keep him," whispered Ben, on the verge of tears. "I found him and he followed me all the way home."

"But, Bennie, suppose you lost your cap on the inside of which happened to be your name and address. Suppose some little boy found it

and kept it for himself, what would you think of him, would you call him honest? ”

“No,” replied Ben, shaking his head, but his lips trembled and a big tear welled up in each blue eye and rolled down the little cheeks as he realized that the fine Christmas he had planned for Bill was slipping away.

“The sooner I take him back, the better, I suppose,” murmured Bennie; “think I’ll start now.”

“That’s my brave, honest little boy,” said his mother, while Ben dashed a few tears away that *would* come in spite of himself.

Bennie ate a little breakfast, took his coat and cap and hurried across to the empty room.

He wrapped the old shawl around the little dog and ran down the long flight of stairs to the street.

As he walked rapidly along, he wrapped the shawl closer for it was bitterly cold, and his own little hands were blue.

A big policeman directed him to the street, and he found himself on a broad avenue, lined on both sides with great brown-stone houses,



that looked exactly alike to Bennie's wistful eyes.

"In one of these houses the little dog belongs," thought Ben, as he rubbed one hand to warm it. "Oh, if it would only turn out that the people didn't want it, then he would have a right to keep it and Bill might have a Christmas present!" The thought made his face beam with expectation; he quickened his steps, and just then, glancing up, met the eyes of a lovely little girl, with red-gold curls. She was standing at a great wide window, in one of the brownstone houses, looking down at him; and in a second Bennie remembered that he had seen her before, one day, when she had looked at the great Christmas scene in the store window.

But this was the house numbered 185, so Bennie mounted the long steps, patting the little dog as he went.

"Perhaps this will be the last time," said Bennie, as he rang the bell, and for an instant he buried his cold face in the old shawl, for Bennie loved dogs and Felicity was certainly a very lovable little creature.

But before Ben raised his head, the door was thrown open, and the little girl with red-gold curls stood there, holding out both hands.

Bennie found himself inside the great house, where he deposited dog and shawl on a carpeted floor.

"Oh, my own Felicity, my dear, sweet, little dog, I thought I'd never see you again," cried the little girl, taking the dog in her arms.

"And wasn't it lovely you found him for me," she said, turning to Bennie. "I am so happy and so very much obliged. You know it would have been dreadfully lonesome if Felicity was not home for Christmas. And I'm so glad papa sent to all the papers that he was lost and Oh, wasn't it lovely that you found him! Oh, my dear, dear Felicity, I thought I'd never see you again."

It was strange how happy little Ben felt, when he saw the little girl so pleased. He forgot his disappointment and stood fingering his cap, a smile on his bright little face. But a tall, sweet-faced woman had glided into the hall and had noticed the chubby hands, blue with the cold, and had invited Bennie into a beautiful room,



before an open fire. And she had questioned him about the finding of the dog, whereupon Ben had told her the whole story.

There was something very sweet and winning in the woman's smile. It seemed at times to Bennie that he was talking to his own dear mother, he felt so much at ease in her presence.

Little by little she drew out the story of Bill and the sick mother in the little room at home.

She even wanted to hear about the brown cottage in the country; and Bennie told her everything he could remember, even to the two tame squirrels.

When he had quite finished, she stooped and kissed his sunny face.

"Bennie," she whispered, "I am so glad we have become acquainted."

They talked again for several minutes before she said good-by, and Bennie left the great house, with all the interesting and beautiful things.

He was so full of his visit that he ran all the way home to tell his mother. Indeed he ran so very fast he stumbled and fell over a great bunch

of evergreens outside a meat store, and a couple of lads about his own age laughed loudly at him. One of them threw a big walnut after him and shouted, "Say, there's a big hole in your stocking, better not hang that one up to-night."

Bennie hurried along without a reply. When his mother was well, he never had holes in his stockings. It did not trouble him at all to have holes there, but it was dreadful to think that he could not hang up his stocking that Christmas eve.

When he reached home and told his mother all the events of the morning, she said, "And aren't you glad, dear, that you made that little girl so happy," and Bennie admitted that he was.

In the early afternoon he took one more trip to the big stores for a last look at the Christmas scenes, and returned home at dusk.

As he approached the big tenement house, he saw a closed carriage standing outside, drawn by two horses, and a man in livery was walking up and down.

Bennie climbed the stairs quickly and when he opened the door what a surprise he had.



At his mother's bedside stood the sweet-faced woman, and the little girl with red-gold curls. There were some beautiful flowers on a table and bundles and boxes on the floor.

Brother Bill was there too and a young girl in a spotless white cap and apron was making a fire in the kitchen stove.

The visitors were just taking leave, as Bennie entered, and the little girl whispered, "Be sure and hang up your stockings to-night, Bennie, because mamma says Santa is surely coming."

Oh, what a splendid Christmas that was! I could not begin to tell you all the good things Bennie found the next morning. There were warm 'mittens and new clothes. There was a sled and a rocking-horse and a magnificent picture-book aglow with giants and fairies. There were fine games for brother Bill's deft fingers. Nuts and candies and oranges and all sorts of goodies were there in abundance, and best of all there was mother, smiling and happy, and a cheerful young woman, in spotless cap and apron, to nurse her back to health, for there were promises of plenty of sewing to do, at home,

when she was strong again. And Bill! poor, blind Bill was going to a splendid school, where he would learn many things that would help to make him a happy, useful man.

Oh, Blind Bill's Christmas was good after all. It was a great, glorious, never-to-be-forgotten one!



## CHAPTER VI

### COMPOSITION DAY

AT the beginning of the fourth day Jimmie was rather tired of the house and he longed to get out and go to school again; it was the week before Christmas too, and Rand Cotter might come any day to Sunnyview.

Shortly after breakfast Jimmie was surprised to see Mr. Marron drive up and stop his big sleigh at the door.

“More work for me,” thought Jimmie, but the milkman said he had just called on his way to town to give Jimmie a ride to school.

Our hero was delighted. He drew on his overshoes, pulled his cap over his ears, turned up his coat collar, and was ready in a very short time.

His mother placed his lunch box in his hand, as he jumped into the sleigh, and off they started down the long country road, white with snow. When Jimmie reached the schoolhouse, he saw

there only Hank Allen. Miss Drew told the boys they could go to the blackboard and draw whatever they pleased, which was a rare treat for them. Jimmie liked nothing better than a blackboard and chalk all to himself.

A little later several other pupils arrived, and in a short time the entire class was present; but it was after ten o'clock before the regular lessons were begun, and then Miss Drew started out in a rather unusual way.

"Christmas is almost here," said the teacher, "I know you are all looking forward to it and the pleasant times it will bring. Next Friday, as you know, school closes for ten days, which means a nice long vacation for you.

"This morning," she added, "I am going to give you paper and you are to write a composition on Christmas. You may have one hour to do it, and I am sure that every boy and girl will do his and her best. Oh, please do not look so crestfallen," she added with a twinkle in her blue eyes; "Jimmie Suter looks as if I had just asked him to write a warrant for his arrest, and Johnny Moor seems frightened to death."



For a second all eyes were turned on Jimmie, who felt his cheeks burn; but the papers were distributed and some of the pupils had soon begun their task.

There were two things Jimmie hated to do. One was to speak a piece, the other, to write a composition. He started out bravely, however, by writing the word "Christmas" in the middle of the first line. Then he stared at it till every little curve and twist in the letters stood out like separate designs. He turned his paper sideways and viewed it from different angles but it looked just the same "Christmas," with never a bit of inspiration in its wooden, unwelcome attitude, as a subject for a composition. He skipped two lines from his subject, as he had been taught to do, and placed a dot at the right margin to begin; and once more he studied the capital "C" and all the letters.

Glancing up at the clock he saw that twenty minutes had elapsed. Goodness! What could he do; he had to write something. He grasped his pencil in sheer desperation and began to write. At that moment a happy thought came

to him to tell about the rocking-horse he had made for his little brother for a Christmas present.

At the end of an hour the teacher told the pupils to finish the sentence they had begun and be ready to read if called upon.

Susie Hibbard, the first one called upon, arose, and with a few preliminary twists and simpers read the following:

“Christmas only comes but onct a year, when folks eats turkey and all their relations gets taken in and squash and things. My father went off and shot a wild goose and my mother roasted him.

“I like Christmas cause there are presents and lots of good things to eat and last Christmas Aunt Maria gave a doll and red flannel and a bank and one shirt and a box trimmed with lace. I saved fifteen cents and bought pa a meresham for ten and ma a cake of soap that smelt it was pink and five cents.”

Susie took her seat, while admiring glances were directed toward one whose facile pen could thus describe the joys of Christmas.



Miss Drew had called upon Susie, hoping to hear one of the best compositions, for Susie be it known, had a glib tongue and was a promising pupil in the language lessons.

When Susie had finished, the teacher, whose motto was always to praise, rather than blame, told Susie there were some excellent points in her composition and they would correct the mistakes another time.

When Miss Drew said, "Henry Allen may read what he has written," there was a shuffle of upper and lower limbs, of which Hank always seemed to possess a larger supply than anybody else.

They were certainly longer than anybody else's and as Hank's desk was none too large, the poor fellow had to use considerable ingenuity in getting his long body out.

When he finally squirmed himself free and straightened out his long legs, he gave a short cough and began.

"Christmas is the day Christ the Lord was born, we sing him and rejoice. Glory to excelsior. We had a Christmas tree. It caught

on fire by night and burnt a spot on the rug and the parlor curtain. We all ran with pans of water and squashed it. Pa got money from the fire insurance to buy a new rug and a parlor curtains, but ma turned over the rug and darn the curtain. In a stable in Bethlam."

Hank, as you perceive, was slightly mixed, but he meant well.

Little Tommy Burns was called upon next. He read the following:

"Christmas, the night before, we hang up a stocking behind the stove. I get a orange and candy, a horn of plenty and some others. Last Christmas ma hung up her stocking and got Daniel Webster, with no hair on his head. He was deaf and dumb cause he had no teeth and only weighed six pounds. Now he is most a year an' lafs when I tickle him."

"Now, Johnny Moor, what have you written?"

"Northin," said Johnny, while a suppressed giggle swept over the room.

"Oh, Johnny, please do not say 'northin.' If you haven't written a single word on your



paper just tell me so; say 'I haven't written anything.' Is that true, Johnny?"

"I only wrote one line," said Johnny, reluctantly.

"Well, stand and read your line."

At which request, Johnny arose and, squinting hard at the paper, as if he could not decipher his own penmanship (and indeed it was no easy task), read with several pauses:

"On—Christmas—folks swap."

When Johnny dropped into his seat, Miss Drew wondered to herself just how far Johnny might get, say in the course of twenty-four hours, at the rate of four words an hour; but being something of a philosopher, she came to the conclusion that as Christmas comes but once a year, it was a long time between "swaps" to Johnny.

Jimmie Suter's composition was very short, describing the rocking-horse he had made for Tod.

When he had read it, Miss Drew collected the compositions to use in preparing future language lessons.

When Jimmie, on his way home from school

that day, came within sight of the big white house, his heart gave a bound.

"The folks are there! Rand has come at last," thought our hero, quickening his steps until he was going as fast as his sturdy legs could take him.

He rushed into the cottage with a dozen questions on his lips; but when once inside, he stood at the door, his face aglow with smiles of welcome, for there on the floor, playing "blocks" with Tod and the baby, sat Rand Cotter, as much at home as if he had been living there for weeks.

"Hello, Jimmie!" said Rand, looking up with a grin; "I've been waiting all the afternoon for you."

"I've been waiting three weeks for you," laughed Jimmie, whereupon the talk began between the two boys and lasted fully an hour.

In the course of the conversation Jimmie told Rand all about the plan to build the ice-boat, including his failure to buy the flat-bottom boat from Ben Ridgeway.

"Ice-boats!" cried Rand. "I have a book that



tells all about them. There are some fine pictures of ice-boats in it too!"

"I'd like to see it," said Jimmie.

"I'll get it and we'll look it over together. Oh, Jimmie, wouldn't it be just fine if you could make one!"

"I think I could. I have the plan in my head, but perhaps if I saw your book I might get some new ideas."

The following morning Rand brought over the book containing the pictures and descriptions of ice-boats; but Jimmie did not have any time to study it till that evening after supper.

When he did see those pictures, he changed his mind about building one from the flat-bottom boat. A new and better plan suggested itself, and Jimmie was full of enthusiasm over it. He made up his mind to start it the very next day, but the last days of school, when everybody seemed to be getting ready for Christmas, were very busy ones for Jimmie.

Rand Cotter had gone to the city with his father and Jimmie did not see him for two days.

Although too busy to do anything about his

scheme, Jimmie comforted himself with the thought that even if he had the ice-boat completed there would not be any chance to use it, as the marsh brook was buried deep in snow.

The last afternoon in school, the boys and girls had a merry time.

At Miss Drew's suggestion they had brought their toys and games, which made a great deal of sport, "swapping" for the afternoon. With plenty of Christmas candy, some games and a story, the time went quickly, and at the end Miss Drew told all the boys and girls in the little schoolhouse that she hoped they would have a splendid time during the holidays.

"At Christmas, everybody in the world ought to be happy," she said, "and I want my boys and girls to make all the happiness for all the people they possibly can.

"Why, you've no idea how contagious happiness is," she went on, and laughed so merrily at this quaint remark that the boys and girls laughed too, though they didn't know why.

"I am sure," said Miss Drew, "if my boys and girls made up their minds to 'catch' happi-



ness, instead of the measles, and went about with smiling faces, pleasant voices and willing hands; if they thought happy thoughts and did happy things for others, I am very sure there would be so many 'cases' of happiness right here in Sunnyview, that it would spread all over Boston, and not stop there but keep on and on—indeed you never could tell where it would stop—if it ever did stop," Miss Drew declared.

"Now see if there isn't somebody you want to have 'catch' happiness and then make up your minds he is going to 'catch' it from you," she concluded.

And this was their teacher's way of wishing them a happy Christmas.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHRISTMAS AT SUNNYVIEW

IN the big white house on Christmas Eve, there were evidences on all sides of Christmas. The rooms were aglow with warmth and cheer. Lights shone from many windows, and the music of laughter reached the ears of an old man, who approached the house, with a basket on his arm, wondering what it all meant.

Poor old Ben Ridgeway! He had lived so long alone in his cheerless home, with no sound save the noise and cackle of poultry, that he had forgotten about the pleasant home life, where there are childish voices, happy laughter, and the pattering of busy feet. And more than all he had forgotten that Christmas was the season of all seasons, that belongs to the little ones. Ben only knew that at Christmas he received a higher price for eggs than at any other time. This thought came to him as he shuffled along, and a



grim smile played over the thin lips, as he looked down at the basket on his arm, filled with eggs that had been ordered for the big white house.

But while still thinking of the money, the eggs would bring, he stumbled and fell forward. The eggs rattled a little but he grasped the handle of the basket firmly, and at the same instant a door was opened; he heard a boyish voice say, "Good-night, Rand," and Jimmie Suter suddenly appeared.

He approached the dark object in the path before him and, in the moonlight, recognized Ben Ridgeway.

"Are you hurt?" asked the boy, as Ben tried to rise, still holding fast to the basket.

"No, but I'm afraid some o' my eggs got broken," said Ben, struggling to regain his feet.

"Let me help you," said Jimmie, taking the basket and placing it aside. Then by putting one hand on the old man's shoulder, and the other around his waist, Jimmie succeeded in helping Ben to arise.

"The eggs! Are they broken?" asked Ben, looking at Jimmie in a helpless sort of way.

Jimmie sank to his knees, removed the cover from the basket and peered at the contents.

"Those on top seem to be all right. There may be a few on the bottom broken," said the boy.

"Why not come into my house and see for yourself," said Jimmie, when he saw the old man's anxiety.

"I believe I will," said Ben, with some hesitation. "I'd like to look them over 'fore I take them to the Cotter house."

He followed Jimmie slowly, and when inside the cottage, he deposited the basket on the table and told of his mishap.

John Suter and his wife helped Ben take out each egg carefully, when they found only four had been broken, but he seemed to feel so bad over the loss that Jimmie's father said: "Maybe we could give you three or four; I'll see."

"We've been short of eggs for some time," said Mrs. Suter. "The hens are not laying very well."

Presently her husband appeared with four



eggs, which he handed to Ben, saying he was glad he could spare them.

For an instant Ben's face brightened when he saw them; then it assumed a most doleful expression, and he said quickly:

"It's terrible hard times, neighbor; how much are you askin' for 'em?"

"Oh, take them and welcome," was the answer.

"Well, thank yer, neighbor, thank yer;" and Ben, with surprising agility, gathered up the eggs and hurried out of the cottage.

When the door was shut on the old man, Jimmie started to make a few preparations for the morning.

He placed the homemade rocking-horse and whip in a prominent place, where Tod's eyes would light on them the first thing. Then he did several chores for his mother and went to bed.

"Merry Christmas, mother!" cried Jimmie, the next morning, coming into the kitchen. He was followed closely by Tod, open-mouthed, in expectation.

"'Erry Tithmas!" echoed Tod, and then, spy-

ing the rocking-horse, he gave a yell at the top of his voice.

"Thee me, thee me," lisped Tod, mounting the fiery steed, while Jimmie and his mother smiled approval at Tod's reckless riding. But the stockings were hanging from the mantel, and suggested all sorts of goodies.

On the table in the sitting-room, Jim found new mittens from his mother, and a fine pair of rubber boots that reached almost to the waist, from his father.

Jimmie produced a workbox that he had purchased for his mother, and a spotted silk handkerchief for his father. Nor was the baby forgotten, for Santa Claus had placed a doll that just filled one of baby's stockings.

"Rand Cotter invited Tod and me over to see his Christmas tree this afternoon," said Jimmie, when the happy group sat down to breakfast. "He's going to have a party from three until five."

"I'm goin', I'm goin'!" cried Tod; "my rocking-horth 'll go, too."

"There's going to be ice cream, I know that



for certain," cried Jimmie, making a joyful grimace at little Tod.

"Ith cream!" shouted Tod, bringing his little fist down on the table with so much force that he lost his balance and would have fallen over, if Jimmie had not jumped and caught him just in time.

"I hope Tod will hold together till this afternoon," laughed his mother, whereupon, to everybody's amusement, Tod assured her that he would not "break."

"I wonder if Ben Ridgeway reached the house safely with his eggs," said Mrs. Suter, in the course of the meal.

"He's probably counted his money ten times since," returned her husband.

"Well, it must be a lonesome holiday for the poor man, up there all alone in that dreary place, when folks are sitting down with all hands home for Christmas."

"Why couldn't we invite him down here to dinner?" asked Jimmie, all of a sudden.

His father and mother exchanged glances, but the former said quickly:

"He'd never come. I don't suppose Ben has been outside that shanty for Christmas in twenty years."

"Perhaps no one ever asked him, father; perhaps he'd like to come."

"Well, Jimmie, it's a Christmas thought, and the poor old fellow is welcome, if he'll come, so after breakfast, if you've a mind, take a run up there and bring him back with you."

Mrs. Suter smiled approval at her husband's words, but Jimmie said: "I guess, I never would have thought of Ben, if Miss Drew had not told us to spread happiness, and it made me think of things."

Our hero was very eager to talk with Rand Cotter about the ice-boat, but he was obliged to postpone that interesting conversation till another time, and after breakfast started for Ben Ridgeway's.

It was ideal Christmas weather: the air wintry sharp, the ground snow-covered, the trees glistening as the winter sun shone on them.

The last time Jimmie had taken that walk, a friendly squirrel had darted across his path and



a busy blue-jay had piped to him from a clump of bushes on the roadside; but to-day he saw no evidences of life until within sight of the lake, when a great flock of crows flew over his head.

Jimmie began to whistle as he approached Ben's shanty, and warbled his best until he reached the door and knocked. As no one answered Jimmie knocked again and again. He was just beginning to think that Ben was not at home when he heard his voice, telling him to come in.

The old man was lying on a lounge in the kitchen, and looked pale and ill.

"I s'pose you came for the money for the eggs," said Ben, slowly.

"What eggs do you mean?" asked Jimmie in surprised tones.

"Why those four eggs yer father give me last night," was the peevish answer.

Jim's face flushed, but he said with a smile: "Oh, no! father didn't mean to sell you those eggs. I came to ask you down to the house to dinner to-day. Father and mother would like to have you come."

"What's that?" questioned Ben, raising himself on his elbow, and eyeing Jimmie narrowly.

"Father told me to come up here and ask you to dinner to-day. It's Christmas, you know. You'd better come," added Jimmie with a smile; "we're going to have turkey and plum pudding."

Ben Ridgeway sank back again on the lounge without a word.

Suddenly he raised himself again: "Could you make tea, Jimmie?"

"I'll try, sir. Do you want me to make some for you?"

Ben nodded and pointed to a narrow closet. "You'll find it there, I guess."

Jimmie Suter had never made tea in his life. In fact he had not tasted it many times, but he had seen his mother put a good pinch in the pot and then pour boiling water on it. He also remembered that one day she had left the room a minute and the tea boiled, whereupon his mother remarked that the tea was spoiled.

If making tea was just pouring hot water on the leaves, Jimmie decided he could do that, and it suddenly occurred to him that Ben was not



feeling as well as usual and he had better get him something else to eat.

He found some bread, and as there was a good red fire in the stove, he toasted a couple of slices.

When all was ready, the old man sat up, and Jimmie brought him a cup of tea and the toast on a small plate.

"That's good tea, Jimmie," said the man; "I was feelin' pretty mean this morning. Guess that fall last night shook me up a bit; but I'm better, an' I thank yer, Jimmie, an' I thank yer father and mother, but tell 'em I'm not much on visitin' an' I guess I won't go to-day."

"Perhaps it would do you good to get out," ventured Jimmie, not knowing just what to say under the circumstances; "you might feel better if you came."

The old man shook his head. "I'm obliged to you, I'm obliged to you all, Jimmie, but I rather think I better not go to-day."

There was nothing more to be said, so Jimmie took his leave, disappointed that he had not succeeded.

On the way he met Rand Cotter starting out for a sleigh ride with his father.

Jimmie was invited to ride home and Rand began to ask a string of questions about the ice-boat.

"I am going to start on it to-morrow morning right after breakfast," said Jimmie; "I'm sure I can finish it in a day, and as we have ten days vacation, we may get a chance to use it before I go back."

"I hope we'll have a rain storm that will just flood the marsh brook," cried Rand; "and then a good cold night—hurray!"

In the afternoon, Jimmie and Tod, dressed in their Sunday clothes, started for the big house to see Rand's Christmas tree.

It was a merry party that Christmas afternoon.

Just picture to yourself the most beautiful tree you can imagine; then make it still more beautiful, a little larger than any you ever saw; fill it with everything that goes to make a Christmas tree truly magnificent, and you might have a faint idea of Rand Cotter's tree.



On one of the lower branches was a fine pair of skates marked "for Jimmie," and a new drum for "Captain Tod," that brought forth a yell of joy from the proud possessor. Nobody was forgotten, and there were games and toys and heaps of goodies.

It was certainly a merry Christmas, and the joyful remembrance of it was carried through life by Jimmie Suter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE "ICE-COMET"

"ARE you going to start that ice-boat to-day?" asked Rand Cotter, appearing at the cottage shortly after breakfast the following morning.

"I'm ready now," said Jimmie, gathering up his tools and starting for the barn, where there would be ample room; and all the material, with few exceptions, seemed to be at hand.

"I did not know you had the boards," said Rand when they were inside, whereupon Jimmie laughed and told him, he had had those for nearly a week.

The first thing the boys did was to build the platform, a triangle about eight feet long on the sides and six feet at the broad end. It was formed of three planks bolted firmly together with wagon bolts of which a number had been found in the barn.

The center of the platform was made of odds



and ends of thin boards, just wide enough to make a place to sit, as there could not be much moving around in an ice-boat.

Across the broad end or the front of the boat, another plank was bolted, but extended beyond the sides a few feet to attach the runners.

At this point the boys met their first obstacle in the building. It was easy enough to fashion the wooden runners something like the sides of a sled, but how to "shoe" them with iron was a problem that made them stop and think awhile.

They talked it over and wandered about the barn to see if they could find anything to suit their purpose.

At first they were not successful but later Jimmie happened to look toward the open cellar of the barn, and spied a portion of an old farm cart.

"I've got it," he cried; "this old cart is the very thing!" and he pointed to some iron stays or braces about a quarter of an inch square that formerly held the sides of the cart in place.

"These will do first-rate for the runners," said the boat builder.

It did not take long to detach them from the cart, and carry them to Mrs. Suter's kitchen.

"Can we use the stove for a few minutes, mother?" asked the busy boy.

"Have you turned blacksmith as well as carpenter?" she answered, with a smile, lifting the covers, so that Jimmie could thrust the ends into the red coals.

"Oh, we're blacksmiths, carpenters, shipbuilders—anything in that line," laughed Rand, watching the iron getting red-hot.

The irons were then taken outside and by means of a monkey-wrench and a few blows of the hammer they were flattened and turned up at the end, at the same time twisted so that the edges would run on the ice. Jimmie sharpened them with a file. They were then fitted to the wooden runners by means of two good-sized screws in each iron.

It took quite a while to do this part of the work, as there had to be considerable going to and from the stove.

After dinner they continued their labor and worked until they encountered the hardest part



of the whole thing, which was the fitting of the rear runner at the point of the triangular platform and which was to be used also as the rudder.

It grew dark before they had settled a point or two to their satisfaction, and the building of the ice-boat had to be stopped until another day.

That evening Jimmie studied the magazine which told about ice-boats and exchanged ideas with Rand about a plan that he hit upon.

In the morning, directly after breakfast, Jimmie hastened to the barn to carry out his new idea.

He fashioned a runner and fitted it somewhat on the principle of a "kingbolt" on the front axle of a wagon. In fact the kingbolt of the old cart was used and when attached to the runners and slipped through a hole in the planks at the point of the platform, was all ready for the tiller to be attached.

Rand found an old ax handle and after Jimmie had bolted some pieces of hard wood to one end, to make it strong and wide enough to attach the bolt, the lower part of the ice-boat was finished.

The next thing to work upon was the mast and sail, and as neither one of the boys had had any experience in sailing a boat, they sat down for a while and talked the matter over.

They were lucky in finding a fine spruce pole that had been used at one time as a temporary flag pole. It was about fifteen feet long and according to Jimmie, "just the thing."

It was a comparatively easy matter to set up or "step" the mast; then the sail and a few ropes were all that were needed to complete the work.

Rand Cotter had intended to buy cloth enough to make the sail, but Jimmie thought it would take altogether too much time to wait until a trip to the store was made. He felt sure that something could be found that would answer the purpose and there would be no need of spending any money on their homemade boat.

Once more the barn was searched and with good results, for Rand succeeded in digging out some old linen horse covers, hidden away in a corner of the harness room.

"Isn't this a find, Jimmie? We'll sew them



together and make a bully sail;" and his partner agreed that they were "fine."

It was rather cold in the barn when it came to sewing there, so, at Jimmie's suggestion they went into the cottage.

A plan for the sail was then drafted; the magazine article on ice-boats was consulted again, and the boys started in to sew, having decided that a fair-sized sprit sail was the best kind.

The sail was almost square with a small pole or sprit attached at the lower corner, near the mast by inserting the end in an eye or hole made by knotting a small piece of cord. It was laid across the sail and was attached at the upper corner by means of a similar eye tied to the sail.

A small rope tied to the lower outside corner served as a sheet, and a small cleat or block of wood to which it was secured, was screwed to the frame of the ice-boat.

The boys stood off in the barn and viewed the result of their labors, for the ice-boat was now all ready to sail when the conditions regarding ice, etc., were favorable.

"How do you like it?" asked Jimmie, survey-

ing the boat with all the pride of a skilled mechanic.

"She's a beauty," said Rand. "Oh, if we could only try it to-day! If it doesn't rain soon I'll flood the marsh brook some way," he added with a smile.

"I hope she'll go fast," said Jimmie, studying the lower part of the sail attachment. "Perhaps I ought to say I hope she'll go. Now wouldn't it be a joke if we'd planned the wrong proportions and she wouldn't move."

"Oh, she'll go," asserted Rand calmly. "I bet that ice-boat will just shoot over the ice. We'll name it the '*Shooting Star*' or the '*Ice-Comet*,' or something fanciful like that."

"The *Ice-Comet* sounds great," laughed Jimmie; "we'll have to paint that name on her, some place."



## CHAPTER IX

### THE "S. F. B."

Two whole days had passed with no prospect of an opportunity to test the ice-boat.

On the third morning after its completion, the boys looked it over in the barn, and afterward their footsteps wandered, almost unconsciously to the marsh brook, though they knew it was covered with snow.

They had not gone far, when they stopped suddenly to look at something lying in the snow at their feet.

It was only three little dead birds huddled together, but Jimmie picked them up in his hand and examined them.

"Poor things," he murmured; "it is easy to see they died from hunger. I tell you it's pretty hard on the birds when the ground is covered with snow. They make a hard fight for existence in the winter."

"It seems too bad to have the birds die like

that," returned his companion; "we could all spare enough to help out the brave little fellows. If everybody did a little, just a little, why I believe it would save hundreds of them every winter—now wouldn't it?"

"Yes, it surely would. I have an idea!" cried Jimmie with sudden enthusiasm; "suppose you and I start a movement to feed the birds and have a regular system about it. We'll establish feeding posts here and there and make it our business to get food to those places."

"Good enough! Great scheme!" Rand broke in. "We won't confine it to Sunnyview, either; let's see if we can't get the boys in the near-by towns interested."

"I'll tell you what we could do, Rand; put a notice in the *Suburban News*, that's our biggest paper you know, asking the boys in Meadowtown, Northwood and Belleview to join the movement. Perhaps they'd give us a column in the paper to exchange opinions and tell about our work. We'd make Sunnyview the headquarters and Rand Cotter the president. How does that strike you for a scheme?"



"It's a bully old scheme, Jimmie, and I'm going to speak to my father about it; but I think you ought to be the president, because it was your idea, besides you live at Sunnyview all the year round."

"Yes, that's true. Still, I think it would be all the better to have a city president. Boston is the Hub, you know. You might start the city boys in this, too. President Cotter of the S. F. B. (the Society for the Feeding of Birds), doesn't that sound big?" and Jimmie threw up his cap, he was so pleased, while Rand beamed over this new honor that Jimmie was thrusting upon him.

That night when Rand told his father about the new society, Mr. Cotter was much interested and made several suggestions in regard to carrying out the movement to bring the best results.

He thought it would be a good plan for the members to wear badges and as he was going to the city the following day, he said he would have some made.

It was further agreed that the president of the S. F. B. ought to introduce the matter at

once. With Mr. Cotter's help the next issue of the *Suburban News* contained the following notice in large type:

“BOYS, ATTENTION!

“It is a fact that every winter many of our birds die from starvation. If everybody helped to feed them this could be avoided. Are you willing to give your mite to save them? If you love these useful little creatures that God made for our delight, join the ‘S. F. B.’ at once. Send your name and address to

Rand Cotter, President,  
Sunnyview,

and receive a badge and list of instructions.”

This was the beginning of a very important movement. In the course of a few days Rand received many letters, which he and Jimmie answered at once, enclosing badges and instructions.

These included a suggestion that one boy in every neighborhood be appointed captain; that he try and interest the other boys in the move-



ment and look after the interests of the birds; that a number of "feeding posts" at reasonable distances apart be established and visited by him from time to time; that he keep a list of all under his personal supervision and send a weekly account of the work accomplished to the president.

Among the letters which the boys received was one that interested them very much and they both thought they would like to meet the writer. It read as follows:

"RAND COTTER, President of the S. F. B.

"DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

"I live on the edge of Crowell's Woods, and have been feeding the birds for the past six winters. Some of them now are quite tame and fly on my shoulder and pick crumbs from my hand. I always shovel a little place to feed them and tie pieces of suet and sometimes raw meat to the trees, where they can get at them easily.

"One day, about three years ago, a blue-jay came to my window and tapped it with his beak

as plainly as if he were calling me. I went to the door, and on the steps was a starved, half perished little bird. I threw my cap over it and caught it, but this did not please the blue-jay at all. He perched himself on our grape-vine, opposite the kitchen door, and scolded me roundly.

“I fixed up a cage for my new friend and adopted him into the family.

“We called him Captain Crumb, and, although he seemed terribly crestfallen at first, in a few days he began to look spunky. He used to cock his head on one side as if he were ‘sizing me up.’

“Pa says I must have made a good impression, because we became great friends.

“Well, to make a long story short, Captain Crumb stays with us all winter ever since, but just as soon as pleasant weather comes he takes up his quarters out of doors. Sometimes we see him every day, then perhaps not for a week or two. Mother says he is visiting relatives then—probably telling them how it seems to be in society all winter.



"I am going to visit a family that live about three miles from here and ask them to join your movement.

"There is a boy about twelve years old—I shall ask him to get some other boys in this. You can send him a badge if they agree. Send my badge to

"PHILIP MOON,

"Woodside Road,

"Northwood."

"We must surely ask Philip Moon to be a captain," said Rand; "and he can appoint others. Some day we'll invite the captains over here and have a jolly good time!"

One of the interesting features of the S. F. B. was the short column devoted exclusively to it in the *Suburban News*. The editor had been kind enough to give space in his valuable paper to help on the good work. In this way everybody could read about it. The society increased in numbers and a splendid work was begun in real earnest.

One morning Rand received the following letter, which caused a broad smile on the faces

of the president of the S. F. B. and his friend, Jimmie Suter:

“TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE S. F. B.

“MR. RAND COTTER: Are you a man or just a mere boy, because if you are I think it real mean of you not to ask girls as well as boys to join the S. F. B. I am sure girls are ever so much nicer to birds than boys. They never steal birds' nests for one thing. My name is Bessie Seabry. I live at Southbridge and I am ten years old, going on eleven. I enclose a poem on birds that I wrote last night. Please answer at once and let me know if I can belong to your society; and send me a badge.

“Dear little birds in the tree tops high,  
What is your song 'neath a summer sky?  
'The flowers bloom, the earth is fair,  
Sweet is summer, everywhere.  
'Tis sweet, sweet, sweet, don't you see?  
Oh, sweet, sweet, sweet, for you, for me,  
Come, neighbor, lift your heart and voice!  
All nature sings—rejoice, rejoice!’

“Dear little birds in the tree tops high,  
What do you sing 'neath a winter sky?  
'The summer flowers are fast asleep;  
Over their beds the snow lies deep.



'Tis deep, deep, deep, don't you see?  
Oh, deep, deep, deep, for birdies wee.  
Good friends indoors, when winds blow chill,  
Do not forget we're with you still.  
Give us from out your store a mite,  
We dream of spring in the long, dark night.'"

"I never thought of girls," said Rand, when he and Jimmie had grinned over the letter and "poem." "Of course girls can help, too!"

He showed the little girl's letter to his father, who said with a smile:

"Just write her a nice letter, Rand. Tell her that if she will promise never to wear a bird or any part of one on her hat she may become a life member and you will send her a badge at once."

The boys went to bed that night with great expectations for a little sport in a day or two. There had been a thaw the day previous, followed by a steady downpour of rain. All that was necessary now was a cold spell, and then to test the ice-boat!

## CHAPTER X

### FUN ON THE "ICE-COMET"

"HURRAH," cried Jimmie, looking out of his window one cold morning after the rain, "we'll try the ice-boat this very morning. The marsh brook must be a sheet of glass."

He was so excited over the proposed sail that he was rushing through breakfast at a most unhealthful rate of speed, till his mother spoke to him about it.

"The ice will hold out for a day or two," said his father. "No need to hurry; mebbe it's the boat that you're afraid won't last," he added with a laugh.

"No siree," said Jimmie, with a decided shake of his head; "I'm not afraid that boat will fall to pieces. It's put together good and tight."

Not long after, he heard a well-known whistle and went to the door to find Rand Cotter smiling in expectation of a sail in the *Ice-Comet*.



"Hurry up, Jimmie; I'm just wild to try that ice-boat."

"I can't go till I fill the woodbox, but I won't be a minute. Come inside where it's warm," said Jimmie, scooting into the woodshed and re-appearing in a short time with a great armful of wood.

When his work was done, the boys started for the barn where the *Ice-Comet* was the one thing visible.

They got it outside and pushed it along carefully to the marsh brook. When it was safely on the ice Rand seated himself in the boat, hauled in the sheet with one hand, and with the other took hold of the tiller. "Ready now," he said, and Jimmie, stooping, pushed it along until he felt the wind had taken hold of the sail, when he, too, got aboard, taking the sheet from Rand.

The boat began to move very slowly. Neither of the boys said a word in their anxiety as to the outcome of this trial trip, but each was wondering if everything would work right, or if they had failed, and had made only a huge, lumbering

affair that could move at a snail's pace and that was all.

Suddenly a gust of wind struck the sail and pulled the sheet out of Jimmie's hand. He quickly recovered it however, and hauling it "home," took a turn around the cleat and held the slack in the most approved yachting fashion.

Rand had luckily given the tiller a turn at the proper moment, for the ice-boat started at a good clip and sailed along beautifully, making the hearts of the builders beat joyfully at the discovery that all was well—that the *Ice-Comet* really could sail at a good rate of speed.

Smiles of satisfaction were exchanged between the boys as they sailed along the marsh brook, but even then they did not make any remarks, till they felt a little more at home in the boat.

Very soon, Rand saw it was about time to turn the craft around.

"Look out, now," said Jimmie, as Rand moved the tiller cautiously in the right direction and she wore around in splendid shape, Jimmie shifting the sheet at the proper time, while the boat



had headway, so that she moved off on the other tack in the most delightful way.

"Well, say, Jimmie, isn't this fine! You ought to be proud of your skill. Did you ever see anything move along easier?"

"Pretty good so far," returned Jimmie.

"Let's run down as fast as we can," said Rand, "to the other end, then turn around and go back corner-wise to have a longer sail."

The wind had freshened since the boys began their sailing, and Jimmie was just about to speak when a strong gust struck them. The boat was now going very fast, and Rand suddenly cried:

"Look out Jimmie, I'm going to turn her quick," and he did—quicker than he ever turned anything before or after! Even as he spoke he put the tiller "hard down," the boat turned like a peg top, two or three times, and the two young ice yachtsmen were rolling over and over, finally sliding along the ice for several yards, very much surprised at the turn of affairs.

When they got on their feet again they regarded each other for a second and burst out laughing.

"How did it happen, anyway?" laughed Rand. "It was done so quickly I did not have time to think; but where's the boat?"

The boat, as they soon discovered, was where it naturally belonged: after turning it had lost its momentum and stood "in stays."

"We'll try that again," laughed Rand; "not the fall. We must find out what caused it to act so."

"Let's figure it out a second," said Jimmie; "there must be a safe way to turn around. The first time we tried it we turned the right way, so we'll try that way again."

The boys took their places in the boat, and when they had good headway turned her so easily that she did not come wholly around, and Jimmie jumped off and pushed her.

"We didn't quite do it that time," he cried; "we'll try again."

They gave the *Ice-Comet* a good start, and Rand could feel the runners gripping the ice. He was just about to give the boat a slight push, when he lost his balance, falling toward the tiller, which caused him to push it "hard down"



again, and in a twinkling they were sprawling on the ice.

"We'll try till we get it right," said Jimmie, picking himself up. And the boys did try again and again before they mastered the trick.

When they finally did succeed, they sailed up and down the marsh brook, the *Ice-Comet* flying over the ice like a huge bird.

The biting wind only gave their cheeks a richer color, and the excitement of the sport made their eyes sparkle.

"This is what I call sport," said Rand, settling back to take things easy for a minute. He had hardly said the words when they landed on their backs on the ice, the empty boat, sailing off in the opposite direction.

After this mishap they learned that in ice-sailing one must watch out for any obstruction on the ice. A small piece of wood, frozen into the brook and reaching above the surface of the ice, had caused the last fall.

When it was time to start for home, they secured the *Ice-Comet* to a tree.

That same night the news of the ice-boat had

spread all over the town, and a new sport was introduced to the boys of Sunnyview.

In the post office, Silas Paul told an interested group that he had been driving along that afternoon, when he saw a boat "sailing like mad on dry land," whereupon, Alec MacLeod remarked, "You must ha' been dreaming Si, an' hain't woke up yit." But every boy who heard the story made up his mind to visit the marsh brook the very next day.



## CHAPTER XI

### AN ADVENTURE IN THE WOODS

THE following morning while the boys were enjoying some fine sport in the *Ice-Comet* a crowd of boys appeared on the marsh brook and stood watching their movements.

Although it was very cold, there was a high wind, and the boat seemed to fly over the smooth surface.

Jimmie, recognizing some of his schoolmates, changed his course and steered toward them, the better to display his boat.

When he reached the boys he stopped and explained, with pardonable pride and to their evident interest, the mechanism of the *Ice-Comet*.

"Guess I won't stay another second," said Charlie Baxter, "I'm going straight home to build one like it."

He turned to go, but Jimmie said, "Hold on a minute, Charlie. If you are going to start one

right off I'll give you some old iron for the runners; that is about the hardest thing to get."

"Thanks," said Charlie, "I'll be glad to have it;" and just then Hank Allen stepped forward.

"I'm going to make one, too," said Hank, "so if you'll let me have a little of the iron I'll be much obliged; but that isn't what we all came up here for. Some of us want 'specially to see Rand Cotter."

"Me? What can I do for you?" said Rand, smiling.

"Well, the fact is," said Hank, "I'm going to be captain of the S. F. B. in my part of the town, and all these fellows are going to work for me. We came up to find out more about it and get those badges you promised in the *Suburban*."

"You can have them now," said Rand. "If you'll wait I'll go home and get them."

"And I might as well go, too, and get the old iron for you," said Jimmie; and they started off together.

"Let us try your boat, while you're gone, will you?" shouted Hank, after the retreating figures of the two boys.



"Go ahead," said Jimmie, "but look for some hard knocks."

"Don't get twisted," said Rand.

"Pshaw!" muttered Hank, getting a hold on the *Ice-Comet*, "it's easy enough to sail an ice-boat. I suppose they think no one can sail it but themselves. Come on Shad."

"What's the matter with this!" cried Hank in triumph. While Shad Wilber seated himself, Hank undertook to steer. The other boys watching eagerly, kept warm by jumping about with an icy wind blowing in their faces. Suddenly the boat shot out into the middle of the brook, and gave a sudden turn that almost threw them out. Hank tried to adjust the tiller while Shad held on to the sides with all his might, and looked scared.

"Why don't you steer her right?" roared Shad, while the boys looking on laughed and shouted. "She'll throw us over in a second. Pull to the right, no the other way, the other way."

The more Hank pulled, the more uncertain were the antics of the ice-boat, until a sudden

gust of wind sent her spinning to the end of the brook.

"You can't do it, let me try it once," said Shad; "I'll bet I can;" but before he could finish they were back again and spinning around like a top, with Hank pulling this way and that, his lanky body almost doubled in two, in his efforts to stop the boat.

The onlookers roared with laughter.

"Oh, it's easy, anyone can sail an ice-boat," shouted the boys, in mockery, and then a good-sized snowball caught Shad Wilber behind the ear, but he was laughing so hard at Hank that he never noticed it. Hank had attempted to stand for a second, when a sudden jerk threw him on his stomach, with much force.

"Ow," cried Hank, while the audience fairly yelled at this mishap; and just at this point Jimmie Suter and Rand appeared on the scene.

Jimmie and Rand ran to the side of the boat and held it, while Hank, rubbing his stomach, rolled out on the ice, his long legs uppermost, and Shad Wilber followed.

Thereupon Jimmie described his experience in



it to the boys' interest and amusement. Many of the boys, at Jimmie's invitation, took a sail in the ice-boat, but most of them were more than eager to go home and try to make something that would furnish half the fun they had witnessed on the *Ice-Comet*.

When they had received the badges and instructions from Rand, they hurried along.

"When I make mine, I'll come up here and race with you," shouted Charlie Baxter, looking back.

"All right," said Jimmie, "we can beat you every time."

When Rand and Jimmie were alone again, they started up the marsh brook as far as they could go, then jumped out, and tying the boat to a small tree, went into the woods a little way, to visit one of their "feeding posts."

Jimmie whistled and called to the birds, while he emptied the contents of a bag of scraps and crumbs that he had carried to the open space selected for the feeding place.

As the boys started to walk away they saw a number of the hungry little winged creatures

making a tremendous chatter over their good fortune.

"It isn't very far to Ben Ridgeway's," said Jimmie suddenly. "When I was there on Christmas day he was feeling very sick. Suppose we call up there and see how he is, before we go back in the ice-boat; we have plenty of time."

Rand Cotter agreed, and the boys continued on their way, walking at a brisk pace toward Ben's shanty.

They had not taken twenty steps, when they heard a peculiar noise behind them. It seemed to begin with a whine and end with a sort of howl.

"What a queer sound," said Rand, lightly; and then glancing at his companion, who had suddenly become very quiet, he noticed that Jimmie looked rather frightened.

"I just saw something that looked like a black dog, behind a clump of bushes, back there," said Jimmie, "and if I didn't know that there are no wolves within fifty miles of this place, I'd say it was a wolf."



"I see it," cried Rand. "Oh, Jimmie, it looks like a wolf. It's 'way back there, coming slowly."

The sight unnerved Rand for a second. A hungry wolf would attack a couple of boys, and they had nothing with which to defend themselves. He was terribly frightened, but Jimmie picked up a stout branch that lay in their path and said quickly:

"It can't possibly be a wolf, I never heard of a wolf in these parts. Foxes are often seen about here and sometimes deer. One morning about four o'clock my mother saw two beauties feeding on the lawn at our front door. She called father and me, and we watched them for several minutes; all at once father shut a door, and at the sound they scampered off toward the woods; but wolves, pshaw! it can't be a wolf—it's a dog."

They were now within a stone's throw of Ben's shanty and Jimmie stood for a second and looked back. At the same moment Ben Ridgeway, gun in hand, followed by his dog, appeared on the scene.

He greeted the boys and said with a grim smile:

"Aren't ye kind o' darin', Jimmie, to tramp up here, when there's a wolf 'round loose."

"Is it really a wolf?" cried Jimmie, telling the experience in the woods.

"Oh, yes, it's a wolf all right; he escaped from one o' the cages in Woodland Park, some twenty mile above here, 'bout three days ago. Haven't yer seen the notice in the paper? At any rate he made a raid on my chickens last night, an' I'm layin' for him."

"He's in the woods now," cried Jimmie, excitedly; "I bet we could get him."

"Come on," said Ben; "let's see if we can find him." And the boys, delighted at the prospect of hunting a real, live wolf, followed him closely.

They went back over the road and Rand pointed out the clump of bushes, where they had first caught sight of what they supposed was a black dog.

But there was no sign of him until they had almost reached the "feeding post," when they



saw him smelling along the ground; but he darted off at sight of his pursuers and ran into the woods.

Ben's dog ran after him, barking loudly, while Jimmie and Rand, each armed with a stout stick, followed.

Suddenly the dog, following the scent, took a side course and approached a great heap of brush and small bushes.

The next instant the wolf sprang into the path, just ahead of them. Ben raised his gun and fired two shots. Suddenly the hunted animal turned made a sudden plunge forward and fell almost at their feet.

"He's dead," cried Jimmie, while Ben turned the wolf over with his gun.

"A good day's work," muttered Ben, a smile of satisfaction on his thin lips. "He got three o' my best pullets last night, the robber!"

"What are you going to do with him?" asked Jimmie, who half hoped that Ben would say he didn't want the wolf, and if so, Jimmie had decided to carry it home on the ice-boat.

"I'll give him to the authorities first thing,

I reckon, and git the reward. Twenty-five dollars isn't earned so easy every day."

"Oh, did they offer a reward for him?" asked the boys, all attention.

"Guess you'd say so, if you saw nearly a dozen men pass my place, in the course o' the day," he said with a chuckle. "The wolf was seen yesterday near Crowell's woods an' they thought they'd git him over that way sure, but I knew after he'd got a taste o' my pullets, he wouldn't go far from my place, at least he'd wander back toward nightfall, and I was right."

Ben put a rope around the wolf and dragged it home, while the boys started for the ice-boat, eager to reach home and tell of the exciting adventure in the woods.



## CHAPTER XII

### JOLLY GOOD TIMES!

"ANOTHER good day for the *Ice-Comet*," said Rand the next morning, appearing at the cottage soon after breakfast.

"Even better than yesterday; there's a splendid wind. Oh, we'll have a bully old time to-day," he added, watching Jimmie hurrying through his work.

"I bet half of Sunnyview will be down at the marsh brook this morning," laughed Jimmie; and he was not very far from the truth, as they found out later when almost every boy in town appeared, dragging some kind of an ice-boat after him.

Rand and Jimmie were enjoying their sail, when they heard a shout from Hank Allen, who led the crowd.

"Hurrray," shouted Hank, "I've got something here'll beat yours."

“Bring her along,” called Jimmie, “and we’ll have a race.”

On close inspection, Hank’s boat was found to be a big shoe box, fitted up with runners and a sail. Shad Wilber had a raft, with a sail, while Charlie Baxter had a very fair-looking boat made somewhat like the *Ice-Comet*.

For a short time the boys watched Charlie trying to master the trick of handling his new boat; but the wind was terribly strong and there was so much fun trying the shoe-box and the other original ice-boats, that in a short time all hands were aboard for a sail.

There was much bumping into each other, and even more jolly tumbles on the ice, but not one of the boats could approach the *Ice-Comet* in the matter of sailing.

Charlie Baxter’s boat went fairly well, and for a few minutes the ice was cleared of the more clumsy boats, while Charlie and Jimmie planned a race.

The boys started from the north side of the marsh, where the wind was in the right direction. The boats were placed on a line marked



out on the ice, and at a given signal from Hank Allen they started. At the very outset they ran into each other and had to begin over again.

It took several trials before they started satisfactorily, and laid their course for a willow tree at the other end of the marsh. For a few feet the boats kept together; then, of a sudden, the *Ice-Comet* took a spurt and dashed ahead. In a second it was 'way ahead and Charlie's boat was plainly out of the race.

The boys raced and sailed until they grew tired of it; some of them had started in to make a snow fort, as there was still plenty of snow on the marsh. Jimmie and Rand became so much interested that they, too, decided to build a fort, and when it was completed an immense snowman was made standing sentry at each of the forts.

"This snow is too hard to work with," said Hank; "but to-morrow I bet there'll be a fresh supply. It's surely going to snow to-day sometime; let's come here to-morrow and have a battle."

This proposition was hailed with delight and

the boys, feeling that a fall of snow would mean no more ice-sailing, started again to enjoy that sport.

Before they reached home at dinner time the snow began to fall, lightly at first, and then it looked as if another big storm was on the way.

"I'm sorry to see more snow," said Rand; "it means we'll have to give up our ice-boat."

"Only for a time," returned Jimmie hopefully. "We'll sail again before you leave here."

It snowed all afternoon and most of the night, but the morning was as fair and bright as a winter morning could be; and when Jimmie's work was done, he and Rand started for the snow fort.

A number of boys were already on hand and had strengthened the forts considerably with the new snow.

In a short time they divided their number, half of them going over to Jimmie's fort and the others staying with Hank Allen.

"Now I'll tell you what we'll do," cried Rand. "We will call our quarters Valley Forge and Jimmie Suter will be General Washington. The



other fort will represent the English, with Hank for General Cornwallis."

"Three cheers for George Washington," cried the group, rallying 'round Jimmie and throwing up their caps.

"First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen," shouted Rand, who had recited that line in school once upon a time.

"Three cheers for the great Cornwallis," shouted the opposing force. "Now before we begin let's get plenty of ammunition," cried the "great Cornwallis," starting in to make snowballs. Thereupon every boy set to work, one vieing with the other to see who could produce the largest number of snowballs, and pile them high behind the forts.

At last all was ready and a big white cannon ball was hurled from "Valley Forge," landing on the shoulder of "Cornwallis," walking leisurely behind his fort.

This was followed by a fusillade of balls from both sides, lasting for several minutes.

Suddenly "General Washington," with a com-

rade's jacket tied over his head for protection, approached the English fort with an immense snowball. He was the target for a volley from the "English," but he dodged and jumped about until within a few feet of the fort, when he hurled his ball with all his might and had the satisfaction of seeing a third of his enemies' fort give way.

Like a flash he was back, when the whole American army made a rush for the enemy.

They were half blinded with a volley of snowballs, but they braved the fire and made such a vigorous assault that "Cornwallis" surrendered after a hand-to-hand struggle with "General Washington," during which martial tactics were forgotten, and they had rolled over and over in the snow together.

In the afternoon Jimmie had a fine sleigh ride with Rand and his father. They started shortly after dinner, going out on the lake road, past Crowell's woods. While going through a part of Northwood they met two boys in the road, who wore S. F. B. badges.

Mr. Cotter stopped the sleigh and the presi-





One chickadee bolder than the rest had alighted on the boy's cap. — *Page 133.*





dent of the S. F. B. called the boys and asked them about the work in their neighborhood.

Jimmie and Rand were very much pleased to learn that the two boys were captains, representing two different sections of their town, and they not only fed the birds themselves, but had gone about and asked every family in the neighborhood to help in the work.

They had a very pleasant conversation, Rand introducing himself and Jimmie, which greatly interested the two captains.

Then the sleigh ride was continued without interruption until all at once a novel sight presented itself.

Not far from a large yellow house, they came upon a boy, standing in an open space he had made in the snow.

He was in the act of feeding a number of birds, mostly chickadees, and one chickadee bolder than the rest had alighted on the boy's cap.

The party in the sleigh had stopped and were taking in the interesting spectacle, while every now and then the laughing boy placed a morsel

of food on his cap, which was picked up eagerly by the confiding little chickadee.

Rand started the horses, as he wanted to approach a little nearer; but the noise of the bells frightened the birds and they scattered to the nearby trees.

The boy who was feeding them, a fine-looking, rosy-cheeked lad about Rand's age, turned to look at the occupants of the sleigh; when Jimmie noticed he wore the red badge of the S. F. B. on his coat.

Without a word Jimmie took out his own badge and held it before the stranger, who smiled and said, "So you're in the 'S. F. B.' too, are you?"

"I should say so," said Rand Cotter. "He is the boy who thought out the whole scheme."

"And he is the president," said Jimmie, pointing to Rand, with a grin; "President Rand Cotter."

The boy raised his cap, and made a low bow with mock courtesy. "I thought the president of the S. F. B. was a big fellow, but I guess you're not any bigger than I am. If you're the presi-



dent, maybe you know who I am. I wrote you a letter——”

“About Captain Crumb,” broke in Rand, smiling all over. “I guess you’re Philip Moon.”

“That’s my name,” said the lad.

Jimmie thought the new boy had the merriest eyes he ever saw.

While this bit of conversation was going on between the boys, the hungry birds made a great deal of noise and clatter from the near-by trees.

“They don’t like to be disturbed at meal time,” said Philip Moon, his bright, sunny face beaming all over.

He threw some more scraps on the ground, and turning to the boys said:

“Would you like to see some fine rabbits?”

The boys declared they would and jumping out of the sleigh followed their new friend to the barn of the yellow house.

There were five rabbits, and very pretty and tame they were, running to Philip when he called them and poking their heads into his coat pocket to nibble crumbs that he had placed there on purpose.

When the boys had played with the tame rabbits awhile, Philip took his new friends upstairs to the loft to see his pigeons. He had ten, all told, which he showed with pride, especially two very handsome white carrier pigeons.

"And now I have something else to show you," said the boy, leading the way out of the barn, toward a small shed with a roof made of glass windows, the panes of which were very small.

"What do you suppose is in there?" he asked, with a broad smile, before he opened the door.

"Is it a goat?" asked Rand. "Maybe it's some kind of a fancy breed that requires a glass roof."

Philip Moon laughed aloud. He seemed to enjoy keeping the boys in suspense, and said, "Come, now, guess again. It isn't exactly what you'd call a goat."

"Why! I get a strong odor of violets, but it can't be that," said Jim. "Don't you smell them?" he said, turning to Philip and Rand.

"I do for sure," laughed Philip, "but our big president here thinks it's a goat."



Then he opened the door to the tiniest greenhouse you ever saw, filled with violets.

"Growing violets in winter!" exclaimed Jimmie. "Well, that's an odd thing for a boy to do."

"It's lots of fun," cried Philip, "and it isn't a hard thing to do either. This was an old shed and father fixed it up for me, putting in the glass roof. That small pipe connects with the house, and supplies the heat. On very cold nights I also use a small stove; but they don't require very much heat. The right kind of soil and lots of moisture are about all you have to look out for."

The violets blooming in large boxes on a sort of table, filled the air with their delicious fragrance.

"Do you like to plant things and watch them grow?" he asked, with his brightest smile; and without waiting for an answer he went on, "I like to 'grow things' better than anything else. I tried an experiment last fall. I'll tell you all about it sometime. When I'm a man, I'm going to bring some flowers and fruits that grow in

islands 'way off, and see if I can't raise them here, I mean, of course, where the climate is like ours."

Philip seemed to know a great deal more about growing things than his companions. It was easily seen that he was very much interested in his pet schemes and enthusiastic over the subject of growing plants.

As the three boys stood together in the home-made greenhouse, they presented a striking contrast, not only in looks, but in tastes and inclination; and yet all were fine types and interesting boys.

Philip and Rand stood shoulder to shoulder, as regards height, and both had finely cut features and straight, black hair; but Rand was more of a dreamer than Philip. As a child he had loved fairy stories and he still liked to take imaginary trips, himself the hero of the boyish romances he liked to weave.

Philip Moon had a fine forehead and his bright face seemed constantly ready to break into the sunniest smiles.

One would know that he loved all human kind,



and that no creature or growing thing was too insignificant to claim his care and attention.

As for Jimmie! but no pen could describe Jimmie Suter! One could say, and with truth, that he stood half a head higher than his companions, that his features were not strictly regular. He had a round, innocent face, every square inch of which was freckled; a pair of honest gray eyes; a thick mop of dark red hair, a tuft of which always stood erect and waved defiance on the very crown of his head.

One could say all this, but that would not be telling of Jimmie's quick, clever, practical nature, his boyish zeal to do things, his loyalty and unswerving honesty.

But Rand's father called, while they stood in the little place, and told them it was time to start for home; so they took leave of their new friend, with a warm invitation to come to Sunnyview the very first Saturday he could spare.

## CHAPTER XIII

### JIMMIE'S TELEPHONE

"It's too bad we can't have another chance to sail the ice-boat before I go back to school," said Jimmie the following day, while the boys were making a coast down Sunset Hill.

"School," repeated Rand, resting on his shovel and looking keenly at his companion, "I never thought of that."

"Just because you don't have to go, you forget all about others," smiled Jimmie. "Tomorrow is the last day of my vacation."

"Oh, pshaw!" cried Rand, petulantly, "and I was planning ever so many things to do to-morrow. You know, Jimmie, we won't be here a great while longer and I wanted to sail the *Ice-Comet* every minute. I never had so much fun in my life as I've had in that boat."

"Well, there's no use in planning for sport during school hours," returned our hero. "We'll



have to wait, and hope for a change in the weather, before we can sail again. We've had a great deal of snow, more than usual, this winter, but," he added hopefully, "there's a big thaw about this time of year usually; then if we have rain and a good cold night, the marsh brook always overflows, and the whole marsh is a lake."

" 'Sunnyview Lake,' there's a new name for you," cried Rand. "It sounds good, too."

His expression of disappointment vanished for the time. He stood thinking a minute and then said, with his happiest smile:

"The famous ice-boat, known as the *Ice-Comet*, owned by Jimmie Suter and Rand Cotter, can be seen every pleasant day on Sunnyview Lake. The exhibitions of skill and speed displayed by these two young ice-yachtsmen are little short of marvellous.

"Ahem!" said Rand, when he had finished speaking. "How does that sound, Jimmie?"

"How would it look in print?" cried Jimmie, and his face lit up. "I have an idea!"

"You generally have a few and some

to spare," laughed Rand. "What is it this time?"

"Put that notice you just made up in the *Suburban News* in our S. F. B. column, and invite all the captains of the surrounding towns to come over here and see the fun."

"Good idea, Jimmie! Splendid! There's only one thing wrong about it, we'll have to wait until Mr. Weather sends us the right conditions before we can show off the *Ice-Comet*."

"Of course," returned the other, "I meant when the brook was frozen again."

"And so you really go back to school day after to-morrow," observed Rand, returning to the original subject; "wish I had a telephone or something from my house to the school."

"Another idea, Rand!" and Jimmie stopped shoveling and began to grin at his companion; every freckle on his rosy face glowing in the crisp, wintry air.

"Where do you keep all your ideas, I'd like to know," laughed Rand.

"Under this," said Jimmie, tapping his cap; "and the funny part of it is, I don't know they



are there, until you say something and then they just pop out. You just made a remark about a telephone to the schoolhouse; that's out of the question, but I can make one from your house to mine in less than ten minutes."

"You can!" exclaimed Rand, half doubtfully.

"Oh, not the kind you mean," laughed Jim, "although if we stopped to plan it out we might stretch a wire and have a signal code; but mine is a simple affair. There is an old pulley somewhere in the barn, and if I can find it and get a piece of rope, I'll make something that'll be just as good as a telephone.

"Say! let's do it now," cried Rand, dropping his shovel.

"Oh, don't you want to have a good coast first?" said our hero, who always liked to finish anything he had started. He knew that in a short time the coast would be a fine one.

"Perhaps we had better," said Rand, beginning with a will to do his part.

In a few minutes the work of making the coast was completed, and dragging their double runner to the very top, they sped down the old hill

again and again, enjoying the sport so thoroughly that it was noon before they knew it.

After dinner they searched in the barn for the old pulley that Jimmie had seen there the summer before; but not a trace of it could be found.

Jimmie was very much disappointed, as he had it in his head to get a strong rope and do all sorts of things on the pulley. They were obliged to use a ball of twine, slipped through the blind-fasteners, but it worked beautifully to send notes back and forth and even something else that Jimmie thought of.

Just before going to bed that night he made up his mind to play a joke on Rand. He found a toy basket, that belonged to his baby sister, and attached a tiny bell to it.

When he had secured the basket to the "telephone," he placed inside a ginger cookie, a piece of cold potato, and the following note:

"Here's a basket of cold victuals for the President of the Society for the Feeding of Birds. When he has had all he can eat, he might give the rest to the birds."

Jimmie, highly pleased at his joke, watched



Rand's bedroom window until he saw the light, and he knew his friend was getting ready to retire for the night. When the light disappeared and all was darkness, Jimmie sent the basket along on the twine pulley.

"Ting-a-ling-ling," sounded the little bell as it went over the line; and by pulling sharply, two or three times, when the basket stopped outside Rand's window, the ringing sounded louder than ever.

Jimmie listened and in a few moments heard somebody raise the window, the basket was taken inside and all was still.

Our hero went to bed with a broad grin on his face, wondering what Rand would say when he read the note and saw the contents of the basket.

In the morning when Jimmie awoke, he saw big drops on the window and heard the pattering of the rain on the roof. He was not sorry to see it, although it was the last day of vacation, and it meant that he would have to stay indoors, for it also meant the overflow of the marsh brook, and more fun in the *Ice-Comet*.

While dressing he heard a familiar "ting-a-

ling-ling" outside his window, and on opening it saw a fine banana tied to the small basket.

It did not take a minute to unfasten the string that held the banana, when the following note, somewhat rain-soaked, dropped out of the basket.

"Here's a nice, fresh banana, strictly fresh. If Captain Jimmie Suter likes it, he can eat it, but give a bite to Tod."

Jimmie thrust the banana in his pocket and ran downstairs, determined to think of something else to send over to Rand.

He forgot all about the banana until after breakfast, when, putting his hand in his pocket for something, he pulled the banana out. Tod, looking at his big brother with round eyes of astonishment, cried out, "Dim me a bit, dim me a bit."

Jimmie started to peel the banana, when he discovered that the yellow skin had been stuffed with cotton wool, and held together with some kind of glue.

He laughed aloud at the trick and how easily Rand had fooled him; but little Tod, whose



"treat" had been spoiled, failed to see any joke in a cotton-wool banana, and puckered up his lips, all ready to cry.

"Don't cry, Tod," laughed Jimmie; and suddenly remembering that Tod's chief delight was "fishing" in his big brother's pocket, said:

"Put your hand in my pocket, Tod, and see all the things you can find."

Tod's face was all smiles as he put his chubby fist in that typical boy's pocket and pulled out an old jack-knife, two marbles, a rusty nail, a bent pin, a ball of twine, a piece of tar, an old butternut, a slate pencil, two small pieces of wood, an old coin, and a crumpled ball of white paper, which, when Jimmie smoothed it out, contained the following:

"Do all the good you can in the world and make as little noise about it as possible."

It was a motto given him some weeks previous in school.

## CHAPTER XIV

“ALL’S WELL THAT ENDS WELL”

THE Christmas vacation was over and Jimmie did not have very much time to play; but he and Rand managed to have a little sport together in one way or another almost every day.

The *Ice-Comet* was once more called into play, as the marsh brook was in splendid condition.

One evening, Rand Cotter talked over the plan with Jimmie to invite all the captains of the S. F. B., who did not live too far away, to visit Sunnyview the following Saturday to see the ice-boat.

The invitation was given through the column of the *Suburban News* devoted to the affairs of the S. F. B., and our boys looked forward eagerly to a jolly time.

Philip Moon was given a special invitation by letter, as both Rand and Jimmie felt that they wanted to see this new friend more than all the others.



Our hero hoped that the ice would last, and he watched the weather anxiously for any sign of approaching change.

When Friday night came and everything looked propitious, he was delighted, and talked it over with Rand, as they sat before an open fire in one of the pleasant rooms in the big white house while they were eating roasted chestnuts.

"I wonder if they'll all come," said Rand, when the conversation had turned on the all-important subject, the expected visit of the captains of the S. F. B. the following day.

"My father wanted to know just how many were coming, but, of course, I couldn't tell him exactly. Some of the boys wrote and said they would surely be here. I do hope Philip Moon will come; he's just the one for a good time, and I'd like to see him again before I go back to the city."

"When are you going back?" asked his companion.

"Very soon, I think, perhaps next week or the week after."

"Well," said Jimmie, "if you come to Sunny-view next summer, you'll see him; perhaps the three of us might get together and have a great time."

"Yes, but you see, Jimmie, I'm not certain that we are coming next summer. It's possible my father may make a change, but I hope we shall come, and I'll do *my* best to get here."

"You seem always to get what you like," observed Jimmie.

"Not always," laughed Rand. "For instance, I'd like to go off somewhere hunting big game, but I can't, not at present."

"Oh, that's what I'd like, Rand! I think I'd like to hunt lions in India; that must be exciting!"

"If you'd like good hunting you wouldn't have to go so far," said Rand; "there's splendid hunting and fishing right at home, in this country. There are camps in Maine and Canada, where ever so many people go to enjoy the sport; then there's the Rockies—did I ever tell you what happened to my cousin Bob out in the Rocky Mountains?"



"No," said Jimmie, all attention. "Has he been 'way out there?"

"Oh, yes, he's been in a camp out there and had splendid times; and once he had a pretty narrow escape. He was out hunting one day, and lost his party. He was on the trail of a mountain lion, and everything went along all right until he stumbled and fell over a steep bank. He didn't think very much about the fall, till he tried to rise, when he found something was wrong. Well, the fact is he'd broken his leg, and the pain, when he attempted to move, was terrible.

"There he was, helpless, with a broken leg, and not a living soul in sight; but in a few minutes, he became conscious of something above him.

"He looked up and there met the hungry eyes of a full-sized mountain lion looking down at him.

"You can imagine how cousin Bob felt, lying there, with a broken leg, and a wild animal looking him over before he made a meal of him.

"Cautiously cousin Bob turned a little, and

without moving his eyes from those fierce, wild ones over him, grasped his rifle and fired, just as the lion was getting ready to spring, killing it instantly.

“Wasn’t that a narrow escape?”

“The lion fell almost across his knees, making him groan with the pain, but it was a much better feeling to have him right there, Bob said, than in the other place.

“Well, to make a long story short, his party found him at last and got him back to camp, but the first time I heard Bob tell that story, I tell you I was scared.”

“That was a narrow escape!” exclaimed Jimmie, with a low whistle, when Rand had finished. “Just suppose he hadn’t had a gun or anything with him, wouldn’t that have been awful?”

“Oh, out there,” returned Rand, “a man never takes chances like that; he always goes about well armed.”

“I’d like to go off like that,” he added. “Wouldn’t it be fine if we could go hunting together sometime?”

“It would be fine,” echoed Jimmie, “if we



could camp out together in a real, truly camp; it would be great sport."

"I could have a jolly time just camping out here in the woods, or near the lake, as far as that goes," said Rand.

If the boys could have looked into the future that night, as they sat before the cozy open fire, they would have seen a picture that surpassed even their brightest hopes, but they never dreamed what was in store for them in the way of good times ahead.

At nine o'clock Jimmie had to leave his friend and start for home. He pulled his cap over his ears, when he shut the door of the big white house, and hurried homeward. He glanced at the sky with its countless stars, at the winter moon, shining down on a still, cold earth, and it seemed as if he could discern the slightest circle around the moon. Jimmie knew that this meant a storm sooner or later.

"If it only keeps off till Sunday, I'll not care if it storms for a week," thought Jimmie, as he entered his own cheery kitchen.

Just before Jimmie got into bed that night he

took a last look at the sky, hoping that the next day would be pleasant, so that all the plans might be carried out, which he and Rand had made, for a good time.

He could not have been asleep very long when he was suddenly awakened by a confused murmur of voices and someone moving about outside his room.

Jimmie listened a moment and jumped out of bed. He ran to the window and saw a team, with some men and at that moment heard his father's voice.

Jimmie began to dress hurriedly, and flew out of the room before the task was completed.

"There's a fire, Jimmie, some place above here," said his father, putting on his coat. "Alec MacLeod thinks it's Ben Ridgeway's place."

"Can I go, father?" asked Jimmie, eagerly. "I'm all ready but my coat."

"Hurry then, no time to waste," said the man, going downstairs.

It did not take Jimmie long to muffle up; he was soon outside, on the back of the wagon, and they were driving like mad toward the lake.



On the way, two other teams passed, filled with men and boys, and a dozen or more were rushing in the same direction on foot. When a fire occurred in Sunnyview, everybody turned out to help extinguish it.

At last they were near enough to see, and sure enough Ben's shanties were burning fast. Luckily it was a still night and there was no wind to spread the flames.

In a few moments the men were on the scene and started to work with a will. Jimmie was rushing hither and thither, carrying pails of water, and helping his father find the hens and put them in the barn. In the moonlight it was easy to see several other boys walking about, among them, Shad Wilber.

The hen sheds were completely destroyed, and the shanty in which Ben lived was partly burned; but the barn, by far the best building in the lot, was not damaged at all.

It was a very exciting time while it lasted, but the men worked hard and before very long the flames were extinguished, and the people started for their homes.

Ben Ridgeway reluctantly accepted John Suter's invitation to ride back in Alec MacLeod's wagon and stay at the cottage.

"For to-night, only for to-night, neighbor," said Ben, when they had started on the way. "I'll have to be up here to look after things, an' I can fix up a place to stay in for the present."

It was near midnight when Jimmie followed his father and Ben into the house; and in a few moments he was again in bed, tired indeed from the night's adventure.

But Jimmie was not to sleep very long that night, as he found out a little later, when he felt someone shake him by the shoulder and heard a voice say:

"Wake up, Jimmie, wake up!"

Our hero rubbed his eyes, as he recognized his father's voice, and without a word, jumped out of bed.

"Just slip something on a minute and come with me to the loft," said his father.

The boy snatched a small blanket that lay across his bed, and followed his father, who carried a dark lantern. When they had climbed the



narrow stairs and reached the loft, his father pointed to the skylight.

"There's something on fire out there, near the brook. Your mother and I can't quite make out whether it's a tree or——"

"It's my ice-boat!" shouted Jimmie, in dismay, staring at the sight, as if he could not believe the evidence of his senses. "My ice-boat! Why, father," he cried, as the truth dawned upon him, "it must have been set on fire! Who could have done it?"

"It's a singular thing," mused the man. "I heard the baby cry, and got up to see if she was all right, and as I did I noticed a glare that I could not make out; so I came up here to investigate."

"Couldn't I run over, father, and put it out?" cried Jim, almost ready to cry, as he seemed to realize the terrible loss his fine boat would be to him.

"Too late now, Jimmie; it had a good start before I ever saw it. The sail must be burnt up. I doubt if the framework will burn long; best go back to bed now and see it to-morrow."

"Do you think anyone set Ben's place afire?" asked Jimmie.

"No, oh no," replied his father. "Ben got up and went to the shed farthest away from his place to get a lantern he'd left there; he thinks he dropped a match; but it looks to me, Jimmie, as though someone, on his way home from Ben's fire, thought he'd fix your boat."

Jimmie was silent and did not give voice to a suspicion that instantly flashed into his mind. There was one person at Ben's fire who was mean enough to do an act like that; still, Jimmie could hardly entertain the thought that such a deed had been committed; it seemed so contemptible.

"Better go back to bed now," said his father, "and we can talk about it to-morrow."

So saying, he led the way out of the loft and downstairs.

"What a disappointment it would mean," thought Jimmie, as he got into bed again and went over, in his mind, the burning of the ice-boat.

"Who could have done it?" he asked himself



over and over, and thought with regret of Rand’s great disappointment, when he should hear of it. If the next day was pleasant all the captains would come to Sunnyview to see the *Ice-Comet*. It was too bad! and in the midst of his unsettled thoughts Jimmie fell into a deep sleep and did not open his eyes until the morning sun was streaming in his window.

Like a flash Jim was out of bed; and when he had dressed, he wrote a hasty note to Rand, telling him what had happened to the *Ice-Comet*. He placed his note in the “telephone” basket and sent it jingling over to Rand’s window.

It was a fine, clear day, and as our hero looked across the pleasant fields of Sunnyview, he thought, with a pang of regret, what a splendid time would have been assured if there had been no mishap the night before.

When he went downstairs he found his father and mother, smiling over the early departure of Ben Ridgeway.

“He just swallowed a mouthful of coffee,” said Jim’s mother, “and a piece of toast, and hurried away; but he’s coming back. He said

he was going to have a two-room cottage built and he wants to see your father about it."

Jimmie had hardly finished his chores, after breakfast, when Rand appeared, and they hurried off together to the spot where they had left the *Ice-Comet* the day before, securely tied to a small tree.

All that was now left of their jolly boat was a few charred boards.

"I only wish I knew who did it!" cried Rand, indignantly. "I'd make him pay for it."

Again a name was on Jimmie's tongue, but it was only a suspicion, and he felt he ought not to say it.

"I've been thinking all the morning what we can do when the captains of the S. F. B. come here to-day," remarked Jimmie.

"Oh, we'll skate and play hockey," returned Rand. "I told them to bring their hockey sticks you know; but it seems too bad to disappoint them about the ice-boat, when we'd counted so much on it."

About two o'clock that Saturday afternoon, the first guest arrived, in the person of Philip



Moon. He was followed shortly by a group of five boys who hailed from Belleview. A party of four from Northwood came next and almost immediately still another batch of the S. F. B. captains put in an appearance. They were all greeted warmly by Jimmie and Rand. Every boy wore his badge and for several minutes, there was a lively conversation about the doings of the various captains in their respective neighborhoods. When the talk turned to the event of the day, the ice-sailing, Rand told the story of the burning of the *Ice-Comet*. The boys were shocked on hearing of the mishap and went to the marsh brook to see all that was left of the boat, while Jimmy explained to them just how he had put it together. Of course the visitors were disappointed not to have had the fun of sailing in the ice-boat, but as they had all brought their skates and hockey sticks, they started in and very soon an exciting game was in progress.

They played until Rand's father suddenly appeared on the edge of the ice, and called Jimmie. He whispered a few words to our hero and sauntered leisurely back to the house.

Jimmie called all the boys to come near and hear what he had to say. At the "gathering of the clans" Jimmie told them to take off their skates and go up to the big white house.

"I don't know what it is," said Jimmie, "but Mr. Cotter said there was something up there you'd want to see."

"Let's go at once," said Rand, beginning to unfasten his skates.

"And then we must start for home; at least I must," said Philip Moon, taking out his watch.

With boyish cheers and shouting, the visitors followed their president to the big white house; and when they opened the door of the large hall, there was a sight for twenty hungry boys, who had played hockey all the afternoon! A feast had been prepared. A long table, filled with good things, was waiting, and at the end of the banquet hall hung a large sign, made out of holly leaves, which read:

"WELCOME, CAPTAINS OF THE S. F. B."

I need not tell you that the whole affair had been planned by Mr. Cotter, and was as much a



surprise to Rand and Jimmie as it was to the visitors.

It was a very joyous gathering. The burned ice-boat was forgotten, as jokes and laughter mingled with the good cheer. Philip Moon told a funny story, then ideas and personal experiences were exchanged between the boys, and plans for more meetings in the future were discussed.

It was a splendid ending to the afternoon's sport, seeming almost to make up for the great loss of the *Ice-Comet*; and when it was over and the boys started for their homes, no braver, merrier, happier captains could be found in all the wide world than those of the S. F. B.

## CHAPTER XV

### BUSY TIMES

Two weeks had passed since the meeting of the captains of the S. F. B.

The big white house was closed and the occupants had betaken themselves to the city for the remaining part of the winter.

At first it was very lonely for Jimmie without Rand; but he consoled himself with the thought that the warm spring days were not so far away, when his friend would probably come again to Sunnyview; so he looked forward hopefully to more good times in the future.

One Saturday morning Jimmie was working away at his bench, making a small wagon for brother Tod, when his mother appeared before him, a letter in her hand. "I suppose it's from Rand," she said, with a smile. "Alec MacLeod just brought it from the post office."

"It isn't Rand's writing," said Jimmie, look-



ing at the address, and then hastily opening the letter he read aloud the following:

“FRIEND JIMMIE:

“I thought I could come over to see you on Saturday, about something special, but fell on the ice yesterday and sprained my ankle; so this changed all my plans. What I wanted to see you about is this: Will you build a canoe for me, just like the one in your barn, that you made last summer out of cheese boxes?

“I’m no good at building. I guess I’m not clever at making anything and just want to plant all the time.

“I’ve got an orange tree started in my kitchen and am having lots of fun watching it. Last summer I planted some blueberry bushes (from the seed) and in the fall I transplanted one in a firkin and have had it in the house all winter.

“I want to find out sometime if it isn’t possible to raise blueberries in early spring. I wonder if anybody has ever tried it. My father says ‘it’s a wild goose idea.’

“Last year I started all our tomato plants in

the house from the seed, and later on planted them in our garden.

“Well, now, if you’ll get all the material and make the canoe for me, I’ll be glad to pay your price, whatever you think it’s worth; and when my ankle is better I’m going to Sunnyview to see you.

“Your friend,

“PHILIP MOON.”

“Say, mother, isn’t that fine?” cried Jimmie, putting the letter in his pocket. “An order to make a canoe; I’ll make him a dandy!”

“You’ll have to get your cheese boxes first, you know. The last time you built the canoe Rand had them sent from the city.”

“That’s true, mother, but I think I can get them from Charlie Baxter’s uncle, and the sooner the better. Do you think of anything you need from the store?”

“I was just going to say, that I do need a few groceries and you could get them this afternoon. Your father’s so busy trying to get Ben’s new cottage finished, that I know he’ll work till the last minute.”



"I 'ont my wagon, tho I do," cried Tod, who had been waiting patiently, during this conversation, for Jimmie to go on with his work.

"And you're going to have it, Tod, in ten minutes," said the builder, starting in with a will to finish his task.

When it was completed, with a "There now, Tod!" and the happy little fellow was toddling away, Jimmie put aside his tools and went into the house.

Immediately after dinner, he started on his errand to the village grocery store. He had a long walk before him and the roads were in bad condition, but in spite of mud and snow Jimmie made good progress.

There was a promise of spring in the air and in the warm sunshine, this pleasant Saturday afternoon, and the boy whistled in the gladness of his heart as he hurried over the road.

Thoughts of the good times he had had during the winter flashed into his mind. It certainly had been a jolly season, with only one incident to mar its pleasant train of events. The burning of the ice-boat! He could not think of that even

now, without feelings of bitter disappointment.

Again the name of the boy whom Jimmie suspected flashed into his mind; but he determined to put away all suspicious thoughts in the future. He had questioned every boy in his school about the affair, but no one seemed to know anything about it, and all were as much surprised at the deed as Jimmie himself had been.

He was still turning the matter over in his mind when he reached Baxter's grocery store. It so happened that the clerk was busy and Mr. Baxter, a genial, ruddy-faced man, who always had his glasses pushed up on his big forehead, got the list of articles that Jimmie's mother wanted.

"Do you sell empty cheese boxes?" asked our hero, when the man was tying up the last package.

"Empty cheese boxes? Well, we don't make a specialty of them," he said with a smile. "Would you like an empty cheese box, Jimmie?"



"Yes, sir, I would like to buy all you can spare."

"And may I ask what you want so many for all at once, Jimmie?"

"I am going to use them in making a canoe."

"Well, now, that's quite a scheme, shouldn't wonder if we had a few," and the grocer's ruddy face beamed, as he beckoned Jimmie to follow him to the rear of the store.

"You go down there in the basement, Jimmie, and pick up all you can find."

The boy was delighted and soon was carefully searching in the debris of piled up barrels, firkins, and empty cases for his cheese boxes; but in spite of his labor he succeeded in finding only three, which he placed at one side and went upstairs to tell Mr. Baxter.

Imagine his surprise when the genial grocer pointed to a great pile of them near the side door, on top of some flour barrels.

"There's a few I found after you'd gone downstairs," he said, smiling at Jimmie's pleased expression.

"I would like to buy all of them," said the lad, eagerly.

"You may earn them if you like," said the man; "the fact is we're short-handed Saturday, our busy day. I'd have had my nephew up here helping, but he's gone to Boston with his mother. Now, Jimmie, I think you can do just as well, if not better, than Charlie, so if you'll deliver a few orders for me you can have all the cheese boxes and welcome."

Delighted at the chance to earn the boxes, Jimmie expressed himself as ready to start at once, whereupon he was sent with a wheelbarrow full of groceries for a family about half a mile from the store.

When these were delivered he returned and was sent out again with a small order.

On his return, Mr. Baxter said: "Do you suppose you could take a bag of flour to the Wilber's, Jimmie?"

"Yes, indeed," was the answer; "the wheelbarrow is just the thing for that," and so saying the bag was carefully placed in the wheelbarrow, and Jimmie started off.



The Wilbers, a notoriously shiftless family, lived in a dilapidated cottage on the outskirts of the town. The family consisted of father, mother, and half a dozen neglected children, of whom Shad was the eldest.

If the boys asked Shad what his father did for a living, Shad would say at once: "Father's a lawyer and has an office in Boston;" but the townspeople shook their heads in a mysterious way when the name of Jackson Wilber was mentioned.

"Don't know just what he does," said Hank Allen's father one day; "he's not exactly a lawyer, near as I can figger, nor yit a justice. He's somethin' in the city, whatever it is."

As Jimmie Suter approached the Wilber cottage he saw two of the younger children dragging a third on what seemed to be an old blanket.

As he drew nearer, he recognized at once the blanket used as the sail of his ice-boat. Evidently it had been cut off before the boat was set on fire.

Jimmie's face flushed when he saw it and realized that his suspicions were justified; it was

Shad Wilber who had committed that contemptible act.

With another look at the telltale evidence of Shad's guilt, Jimmie knocked, then opened the door and carried the bag of flour into the kitchen.

When he had deposited it on the table, he said to Mrs. Wilber:

"Is Shad in?"

"No, he's out somewhere. I don't know where he's gone this afternoon."

Jimmie was on the point of blurting out his knowledge of Shad's guilt, but it came to him all at once that he would not like to speak of it to the boy's mother, so he remained silent, and started for the door, when it suddenly opened and Shad walked into the room.

Now Jimmie Suter was the last person in the world that Shad Wilber expected to see in their kitchen, and he was so much surprised at the sight he could not speak, but stood there looking from Jimmie to his mother, a guilty expression on his pale, narrow features.

"Jimmie's jest brought our flour from the grocer's; he's been askin' for you," said the



woman, breaking the silence that had fallen in the room.

"Oh, workin' for Baxter, now," said Shad, in a relieved tone, trying to appear at ease.

"No," replied Jimmie quickly; "I'm just delivering a few orders, that's all."

Jimmie grasped his cap and once more started for the door. By this time Shad was quite himself and sauntered after our hero, partly out of curiosity, to find out why Jimmie was delivering orders for Baxter.

The two boys stepped outside, and as the door closed behind them, Jimmie turned like a flash and faced the other.

"That's my blanket, Shad Wilber," he cried, pointing to a place about twenty yards away, where the children still dragged it around the yard; "It was a sail on my ice-boat. You stole it, and it was you burned the boat."

"I did not, northin o' the kind," cried Shad, his eyes shifting uneasily under Jimmie's steady gaze.

"Yes, you did," declared Jimmie; "I suspected you from the first, and now I have proof."

"I never burned your boat, I tell yer," cried Shad; "I found that blanket up near the woods one day, you——"

"I don't believe a word you say," interrupted Jimmie; "It's my blanket."

"Well mebbe it is; I didn't know it," said Shad; "you can ask my brother Bert if I didn't find it up there—he was with me."

Jimmie was getting more angry every minute; he knew that Shad was telling lies. With a look of scorn he drew himself up before the sneaky boy who he knew was guilty, and said with boyish wrath:

"Look here, Shad Wilber, I don't know yet just what I'll do about this thing. You cut off my sail and burned my ice-boat, an' you'll pay for it. But I'll tell you one thing now, if ever I catch you up to any of your sneaky tricks, I'll give you something you'll not forget." So saying, Jimmie walked over to where the children were playing, picked up his blanket, threw it in the wheelbarrow, and departed.

When Jimmie returned to the store, Mr. Baxter informed him there were no more orders.



“Is there anything else you want me to do, sir?” asked the lad.

“Nothing more now, Jimmie,” replied the genial storekeeper; “and if you want any more cheese boxes in the future, you just come around and let me know.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Jimmie; and on going outside he felt that luck was certainly with him, when he saw his father’s friend, Alec MacLeod, driving along with his double team. He gladly gave Jimmie a ride home and in this way our hero was able to take the groceries and all the cheese boxes at once.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A JACK-KNIFE CONTEST

By working every spare minute, Jimmie soon had the canoe well under way. He was very busy putting the last touches to it one Saturday just after dinner, when the boy for whom it was being made suddenly appeared.

"Your mother told me I'd find you out here," said Philip Moon, his merry eyes fairly beaming as he gazed at the fine-looking canoe.

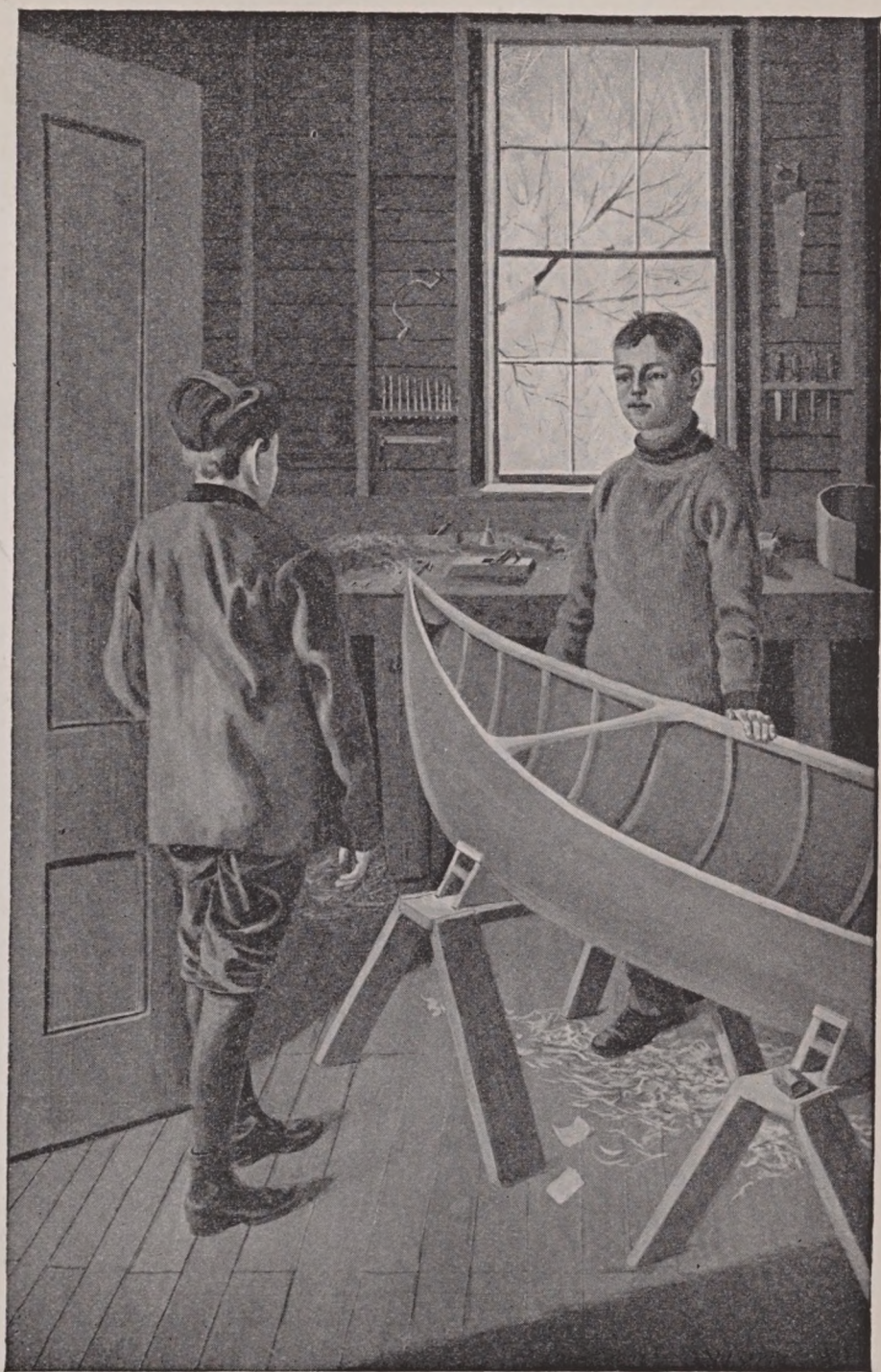
"Hello!" cried our hero, looking up from his work; "when did you arrive?"

"Just this minute. I thought I'd come over this afternoon and see how you were getting along."

"It's almost finished," said Jimmie, "but I think you'd better leave it for a day or two. How do you like it?"

"Oh, fine!" cried Philip; "If I could build anything that would go on the water like that, I'd hang out my shingle as a boat-builder."





"Your mother told me I'd find you out here." — *Page 176.*





"Glad you like it," said Jimmie, "but I've been wondering where you are going to use it."

"Oh, I'm not going to use it myself; I want to send it to a cousin of mine who lives in Connecticut; there's a shallow stream near his house, something like the marsh brook. Oh, he'll be just wild over it, and he couldn't make one any more than I can. I go down there every summer to visit him, so you see I'm counting on having some of the fun myself."

"You can come over here and use mine in summer any time you like," said Jimmie.

"Thanks; I'll try to come over, but I'm planning to do a lot of things this summer and may not have the time to even look at you. Did you ever camp out, Jimmie?"

"No, but wouldn't I just love to!"

"So would I," returned Philip; "and I'm going to see if I can't manage it this summer. You see my father doesn't like the idea of my going up to Maine, although I've been invited to spend my vacation in a splendid camp up there. Father says if it were only a little nearer, some

place where he could look in occasionally, he would like it first rate."

"Well, there's your canoe," cried Jimmie, rising from his knees, in which position he had been while giving it one last touch.

"Say, Jimmie, think of a good name for it, will you?"

"Ah! Rand Cotter's the one for names," returned Jimmie; "I'll have to write him a letter and ask him. You know, he's read a great many books and his father has traveled all over the world; and Rand does think of splendid names for things. You know he named my ice-boat the *Ice-Comet*—wasn't that a bully name?"

The words fell from Jimmie's lips half regretfully. He couldn't help it as he thought of his splendid ice-boat and its untimely loss.

Philip felt something of this and said quickly:

"Oh, you can make another one next winter—probably a better one, as you've had a little experience, and know more about sailing it. By the way, did you ever find out who did that, Jimmie?"

"Yes: I feel sure Shad Wilber did it, though



I didn't see him. I was going to make him pay for it, too, and had written Rand about it, but there was a lot of trouble and sickness in the Wilber family, and my father and mother told me to do nothing about it. Mother said she thought Shad's own conscience would punish him quite enough." Jimmie was silent a moment and when he spoke again it was evident he had dismissed the subject from his mind.

"I'll write a letter to Rand Cotter this very night," remarked Jimmie, "and let you know what name he thinks will be a good one. Perhaps I'd better keep the canoe right here and when I get Rand's letter I'll paint the name on it for you."

"That's good; any name he may select will be sure to suit. You can make almost anything, can't you, Jimmie?"

"Oh, a few things, that's all."

"Could you use any old wheels for anything?" asked Philip, presently.

"Could I? Well you bet I could," was the eager reply. "If I had some wheels I'd make a buckboard."

“Well I have some wheels,” said Philip; “they are not so old either. I’ll bring them over.”

While the boys were still talking, there was a shout from somewhere back of the house, and the next minute several of the boys of Jim’s school appeared on the scene.

“Oh, I forgot,” said our hero, turning to Philip with a smile, as he caught sight of his school-mates; “we play Hare and Hounds this afternoon. You come too, and be one of us.”

Philip was glad to join them, and Jimmie ran indoors to get the bag that he had prepared the night before, filled with tiny bits of paper. As one of the hares, he threw out the paper while he ran from the hounds.

All the boys then repaired to the willow beside the marsh brook, the spot agreed upon from which to start. After a brief discussion it was decided to allow Philip Moon to be one of the hares. There was a special reason why the boys were all eager to be hounds that afternoon, and it came about in this way.

The game of hare and hounds had been planned by the boys in front of Baxter’s grocery store,



one day after school. Among the group was Charlie Baxter, the proprietor's nephew, a great favorite with his uncle, who, having no children of his own, treated Charlie like a son, and was constantly giving the boy pleasant surprises. Indeed it had been predicted by more than one croaker in the town that "Charlie Baxter would be sp'iled by his uncle."

Be that as it may, while the boys were talking over the proposed game, with Charlie's voice the loudest in the group, the ruddy-faced proprietor, with "specs" pushed high on his brow and a merry twinkle in his eyes, appeared and listened to his nephew's remarks.

"I'd like to know right here," said the grocer, "who is the best runner in the school, boys."

When the answer was "Jimmie Suter," with here and there a faint cry of "Charlie—Charlie Baxter," the smile on the man's face broadened.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, boys," he said, placing one hand affectionately on his nephew's shoulder, "let Jimmie Suter be the hare in your game next Saturday and whoever is the first to find him inside of one hour will get this."

He drew from his pocket and held before the boys a new combination jack-knife. "If no 'hound' can catch the 'hare' in that time, then Jimmie gets the knife."

This was the reason why every boy was anxious to be a 'hound' that afternoon, and urged Philip to be the second 'hare.'

Now Jimmie Suter, when he heard the conditions of the game, made up his mind to win that jack-knife if he possibly could; and he decided on a certain course of action a few days before the game came off, also having in mind a place of concealment that he thought could be made to baffle the "hounds."

When all the boys were ready the signal was given, and Jimmie and Philip started away like the wind. They were allowed a fifteen-minute start, and Charlie Baxter held his watch for the "hounds" the minute the "hares" were off.

The boys watched the timepiece as it moved slowly, then all at once the leader blew a horn, the "hounds" gathered, the chase was begun.

Past the marsh brook and down the woodland road for a hundred yards or so, ran Charlie Bax-





Philip soon discovered that he could not keep up with Jimmie. — Page 183.





ter, at the head of the "hounds," when, detecting the bits of paper lying to the left, he changed his course.

On and on he ran, a few of the swiftest ones keeping close at his heels. Sometimes he made a straight run for some two hundred yards, and again took a zig-zag course that was puzzling in the extreme.

More than once the "scent" was lost altogether for a time, when suddenly it would be found again by the bits of white paper, and with shouts the "hounds" hurried on.

In the meantime a peculiar thing had happened. Philip soon discovered he could not keep up with Jimmie and therefore, knowing about the jack-knife and feeling that he might handicap his friend, he gave up the race after a half hour's run, and let Jimmie go it alone.

Our hero did not wait for explanations. He kept steadily on, throwing out a handful of paper now and then, changing his course at times, but keeping in view a certain spot where he intended to hide.

The "hounds" soon overtook Philip Moon and

this incident only added zest to the keen sport of hunting Jimmie, for Jimmie Suter was a runner, but Charlie Baxter was considered by many to be equally as good.

It was getting more exciting as the hunt continued, and when at last Charlie found himself "hot on the trail," as he believed he was, he ran harder than ever, looking to the right and left, peering behind bushes, trying in every way to catch his "hare."

While the "hounds" were "hard on the scent," our hero had reached his hiding place. This was a huge, flat stone, part of a rocky wall, that projected in such a way that one could easily lie flat under it, not however, without being seen by a close observer. To obviate this difficulty, Jimmie, clever boy that he was, had visited the spot the day before the game and dug a hole in front of the stone. Beside this hole he placed a bush that he had cut from the very center of a clump of bushes nearby, and as a further precaution, he had in readiness a good-sized stone.

When the hunted "hare" reached the flat stone, he dropped on his stomach like a flash,



and crawled under. Then he placed the bush in the hole he had made, threw the earth around it, as fast as nimble hands could do it, and lastly, to hide the fresh earth, he placed the good-sized stone near the bush.

It looked natural, so much so that one would not suppose that a person could get under that wall without tearing aside the bush.

But Jimmie had hardly got the stone arranged carelessly in place when Charlie Baxter appeared on the scene, and our hero, lying flat on his stomach, drew in his hand and awaited developments.

Charlie rooted like an Indian. He went around the clump of bushes not far from Jimmie's retreat, a dozen times. He glanced casually at the rocky wall, but as no one could get under the flat projection without pulling down a great bush, and a stone, he did not investigate. At last he hurried back a few yards to look over the scent, while Jimmie Suter rubbed his nose with satisfaction.

Thus far his ruse had worked well. All at once Charlie bounded upon the scene again, fol-

lowed by half a dozen others. They took a hurried survey of the immediate vicinity of Jimmie's retreat and then ran on, hoping to come across some bits of paper.

The "hare," concealed in his hiding place, watched their movements with much interest, well pleased thus far with the proceeding. He knew it must be almost an hour since he started. If only he could escape Charlie Baxter a little while longer he felt that he should win.

But again the "hounds" appeared with a shout that made Jimmie suspect they had discovered the limit of his race.

Again there was a hurry and scurry over the field all about him, over the very rocky wall under which he was hiding. Once more the bushes were searched with ruthless hands, when all at once Hank Allen dropped on his stomach and peered under the projecting stone. With a shout he jumped to his feet, holding to the transplanted bush with such force that he pulled it up, and fell backwards, just escaping the good-sized stone.

Then Jimmie Suter crawled out of his lair



with a grin from ear to ear, while the boys gave a yell, when they saw how cleverly he had fooled them.

“Well, you win, Jimmie,” cried Charlie Baxter. “When Hank spied you it was five minutes past the hour.”

This ended the game of “hare and hounds,” played to suit the occasion, and Jimmie rejoiced over a fine new jack-knife that he had won by planning ahead.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SUNNYVIEW GAMES

THE next day Jimmie wrote a letter to Rand Cotter asking him to think of a good name for Philip Moon's canoe. Incidentally, he told his friend in Boston about winning the jack-knife and about other affairs at Sunnyview.

The following Saturday, Jimmie looked forward to another visit from Philip, and he was not disappointed. Very early in the day the boy from Northwood drove up to the door with an old team that his father had borrowed from a neighbor in order that the canoe might be transported in safety.

"It's such a beauty," cried Philip, when the two boys stood before the canoe, "that I'm half tempted to keep it; but I think after all I ought to send it to my cousin."

"How do you like the name?" asked Jimmie, turning it around so that Philip could see.



"The *Philomonda*," read the owner, smiling; "what does it mean?"

"I think it means, or rather stands for Philip Moon," said Jimmie, taking a letter from his pocket. "Here's what Rand says about it; you can read for yourself," he added, handing the letter to Philip, who read:

"DEAR JIMMIE—I have been thinking of a name for the new canoe. How does *Philomonda* strike you? I made it out of the two names Philip and Moon, but if you don't like it, try an Indian name. 'Keewayden' is pretty—it means 'the south wind,' and there are a great many other fine ones. I wish I could see both you boys again—the planter and the builder I call you. You will be surprised to hear that I have gone back to school. I was feeling so well that father thought I could. There are several clubs formed in my school to help the work of the S. F. B. I supply all the badges, etc., and the boys think it is a fine scheme.

"By the way, the S. F. B. is becoming famous. I got a splendid letter from a man away out in

California, who has made a study of the birds of this country. He is very much pleased with our S. F. B. and says he hopes to meet me some time—now I think he means you, because you thought of it first of all. I am going to write and tell him all about you, that you have a head just full of plans, and some Saturday I am going to try and have all the captains of the out-of-town clubs meet the city boys.

“We might arrange to have a big meeting on Boston Common, or the Public Garden, and have a great time.

“Looking forward to summer and Sunnyview and *you*. I am

“Your friend,

“RAND.”

“The S. F. B. *is* a great society,” cried Philip, returning the letter to Jimmie; “and is going to grow larger all the time, I feel sure. I think *Philomonda* is a dandy name for the canoe”

Suddenly Philip ran to the wagon and brought out four wheels that looked as if they had done service at one time on a baby carriage.



"I had almost forgotten about these," he said; "what do you think of them?"

"They are just what I want," cried Jimmie; "I'll make a buckboard and we can have some fun one of these fine days, wheeling down Sunset Hill. This afternoon," he continued, "we play games. You'll stay, won't you, and see the fun?"

"I can't stay, though I'd like to," said Philip. "I told my father I would be home just as soon as I possibly could; he wants me to go to Bellevue this afternoon. I really ought to start at once."

"Very well," said Jimmie; "just take hold of one end of the canoe and I'll help you lift it into the wagon."

"Now, how about the price, Jimmie? How much do I owe you for the *Philomonda*?"

"Nothing at all, Philip; I didn't have to pay for the cheese boxes; in fact I didn't have to spend any money for a thing that went into it."

"But that's only a small part of it, Jimmie; although I couldn't build one myself, I know how much time and labor it takes to put one of those things together."

“Oh, the time didn’t amount to anything; it was all done in spare minutes, and I really enjoyed doing it,” said the builder.

The two friends argued, but Jimmie was firm and would not take any money for the canoe.

“All right,” said Philip; “I’ll get even with you, Jimmie; just leave it to me and see.”

When the canoe was carefully placed in the wagon, Philip mounted the seat, and with a merry good-by and a wave of his hand, started for home.

Jimmie returned to his work bench and examined the wheels; then he put away his tools, cleaned up the shed and went indoors.

He still had a little time before dinner, so he decided to do his “blackening.” It was part of Jimmie’s work every Saturday to black all the shoes in the house for Sunday, and when they were all shining, to place them in a row on the bench under the window.

Our hero went to work with a will and in a short time his task was completed. He filled a tub of water for his mother, chopped some wood,



and shortly after dinner started for the scene of the afternoon's sport.

The boys usually met and played their games in a large level field about half-way to the village.

As Jimmie approached, whistling a lively tune, those already assembled set up a general shout, and in a few minutes the fun began.

It started off with a running high jump.

Two stakes about four feet apart had been driven into the ground and a light stick placed across them. Standing far enough away to get a good start, the boys tried to take a flying jump over the stick, which was raised from time to time, making the jump a little higher.

Hank Allen was easily the winner in a running high jump; his long slender legs went over the pole as easily and gracefully as a deer's.

They then prepared for the climbing act, which many of the boys liked better than anything else.

A stout rope was securely fastened around the bough of a chestnut tree and allowed to dangle to the ground.

The boys took turns in climbing the swinging

rope, landing on the bough of the tree, creeping thence to the trunk, where they shinned down as quickly as possible and began all over again.

Everything was done in the shortest possible time, as half the fun lay in rushing the game. The line of boys, one behind the other, climbing, creeping and sliding down, made one think of a group of frolicsome monkeys.

Every time Hank Allen's long legs dangled around the loose rope the boys roared with laughter and could not resist the temptation to prod him and pull on the rope; but Hank kicked vigorously, using his long legs to good advantage, and in spite of difficulties, managed to climb the rope, feel his way along the bough and, placing his long limbs around the trunk of the tree, shinned down easier than most of them.

Jimmie Suter could climb a rope very fast; indeed there was no boy in the school quite so quick with his hands and legs as he.

When they had grown tired of the climbing, the boys tried several races between given points.

The race was usually given to Charlie Baxter or Jimmie Suter, both of whom were splendid



runners; but although Jimmie could run faster than his rival, when it came to a walking match, Charlie could win over Jimmie every time.

Feats of strength followed, and ended the afternoon games. These consisted, for the most part in throwing heavy stones; and in this contest our hero was first, as no boy in the school seemed to possess so much muscular power.

When the sport was over and the boys had started for home, Jimmie hurried on his way, planning as he went along how he would use the wheels that Philip had given him.

In the midst of these thoughts, he reached the main road and saw Ben Ridgeway approaching with his team.

As Ben came up, he stopped his horse and peered at the boy from under his bushy eyebrows.

"I've just been up to your house, Jimmie, to see if your folks didn't want to buy my hens."

"Are you going to sell your hens?" asked the boy, surprised at this piece of information.

"Well, I'm thinkin' of it, jest thinkin' of it. Your father wasn't at home," he continued, after

a pause, "and your mother thinks yer don't want any at the present time."

"Alec MacLeod might buy them," ventured Jimmie, trying to help out.

The old man did not answer. With eyes fixed on the reins, held loosely in his rough hand, he seemed to have fallen into a brown study.

Jimmie watched him intently, wondering why Ben did not speak.

At last the old man raised his head and regarded the boy keenly.

"How long a vacation do you have in the summer, Jimmie—the school vacation I mean?"

"We have about eleven weeks, sir."

"Eleven weeks," repeated Ben; "it's a good long time."

He was silent for a moment and then added half to himself: "And it would come in jest right too."

"Jimmie," and he raised his voice to a louder key, "I have a proposition to make to you; but I guess I won't say anything to-day. Some time later I'll have a talk with your father and—and—well, guess that's all I better say 'bout it now."



With a short "Giddep," Ben continued on his way, leaving Jimmie very much puzzled by the old man's words and manner.

At supper that evening, Jimmie spoke of the occurrence, whereupon his father said:

"Well, there's no knowing what the old man has in mind. Since I've been up there, making his new house, I've seen a good deal of his odd ways, but Ben is a shrewd, smart man, and he has method in all he does."

Suddenly a smile broke over the man's face and he added:

"He told me he thought o' building a couple of sheds up there himself. P'r'aps he's decided to ask you to do the job."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE COMING OF SPRING

THE following week Jimmie spent all his spare time making the buckboard. It was finished one bright morning and our hero, with little brother Tod, had great sport riding down Sunset Hill.

It was several weeks before Philip Moon paid the promised visit to Sunnyview, but when he did come, he, too, enjoyed the fun and admired Jimmie as a builder more than ever.

The days sped on, nothing unusual happening in the daily routine of Jimmie's life. He went to school every day, did his chores about the house, and played games on Saturday and sometimes after school. Occasionally he read a boy's book that Rand had enjoyed particularly and had sent to Sunnyview. He speculated on the hero of the story and put himself in the hero's position many times.

As the weeks went by, Jimmie began to look forward to the April vacation. It was almost



at hand; the fine weather had really come and he longed for the Spring holidays.

One morning as Jimmie went on his way to school, he realized that on all sides were signs of Spring. Every tiny bud on bush and tree was unfolding day by day in the warm sunshine.

Perhaps the happiest messengers of the approaching season were the birds that filled the fields and woods of Sunnyview with their music.

Jimmie could not look out of his window that he did not see a fat robin, or rather two of them; and yet only a few weeks before he had seen the first lonely robin perched on the fence, watching a snowfall, as much as to say, "I've come a little too early, and I may have to go back."

But now the joy of another summer was close at hand! The fresh moist earth, the new grass, the sight of all growing things, proclaimed new life everywhere, and Jimmie felt it was good to be alive!

It was good to be alive and best of all to be a boy! He whistled as never before from very joy of being, and then he began to plan for the future.

What wonderful things a boy can plan for that longed-for, interesting time! I am not at all sure that our hero's plans were anything out of the ordinary, because he was one of the practical ones, who do the simple things that come every day and leave the wonderful deeds for the dreamers.

We need both kinds of men, so I will not condemn the dreamers; but, practical though he was, there was something in the air this Spring morning, some subtle influence of bird and bush, that made itself felt in him in a wild longing to run away from the little schoolhouse and wander far off into the woods. To sit beside the little brook back of the pines and watch the shadowy water. As the thought flitted through the boy's mind, he turned suddenly and looked about him. Not a soul was in sight. Before him was the road to the schoolhouse—to a long, dreary day, with endless reading, writing, and numbers, a hard desk, a straight-backed chair, and a teacher ever on the alert to see that each one was busy—while back there on his right were the fresh, green woods, the brook and the pines,



where he could wander about at will and do as he pleased, with no disagreeable lessons, and never a teacher to watch him.

For the first time in his life, the desire to play truant came to him with all the force of a strong temptation. He was really tired of school, and it was a shame (so he argued to himself) to have to stay in a stuffy little schoolroom on such a beautiful day, when everything seemed to urge freedom and happiness out of doors.

Jimmie's steps began to lag perceptibly. No one would know anything about it; and he would have a splendid time! Suddenly he spied a figure just ahead that he recognized at once as that of Shad Wilber. Shad's steps were lagging too, and he was taking the very road that led to the woods.

The sight brought Jimmie to a full stop.

Perhaps Shad was going to play truant; but, no, even as he looked, Shad retraced his steps and went toward the schoolhouse.

Shad Wilber was one of the boys who did "hook jack" occasionally, and as this thought came to Jimmie, something of the meanness of

it all crossed his mind. Then he looked at it squarely in the face. His father and mother had sent him to school. It was his duty to go, and they trusted him to perform that duty. He could shirk it, sneak off to the woods, and no one would know. No one? Ah, yes; there was One who saw every act and knew his every thought.

The inner voice of conscience told Jimmie that playing truant was not an honest thing to do. On the contrary, every minute of the time that he spent so, he was acting a lie, and a lie is always the coward's part.

Jimmie could never be a coward. He would not play truant and he put the temptation out of his mind at once, feeling heartily ashamed that he had even thought of such a thing.

With sudden energy, he started to walk briskly, and in a short time was in the school yard.

The first person to greet him was Shad Wilber. "Say, Jimmie, d'yer hear the news about the baseball outfit?"

Before he could answer a dozen boys surrounded him, all talking at once. Jimmie caught a word here and there about "baseball outfit,"



"Indian" and "beans," but he didn't have the least idea what it all meant.

"What are you talking about, I'd like to know?" shouted Jimmie.

"Why, haven't you heard about the prize?" began Hank Allen. "Haven't you——"

"No," interrupted Jimmie; "I haven't heard a word."

Hank whistled.

"There's a new show coming to town next week, and the proprietor is going to give a prize of a complete baseball outfit to the boy that guesses the nearest to the number of beans in a bottle."

At this point the bell rang, and the boys got in line to file into school. At recess, however, the new show and the guessing contest were the chief topics of conversation.

That afternoon when school was over, Jimmie had an errand to do for his mother in the dry-goods store. While waiting for his change, he saw Ben Ridgeway coming down the road, behind the old white horse.

It was the boy's first glimpse of the man since

the day his curiosity had been aroused by the conversation on the roadside.

Ben stopped his horse in front of the dry-goods store and was just about to enter it, as Jimmie was leaving.

"Hello, Jimmie," he said kindly, and held out his hand.

Our hero greeted the old man pleasantly and took the proffered hand.

It was a very uncommon thing for Ben to shake hands with anybody, much less to greet a boy in that way, and Jimmie was puzzled; but the old man stood there, smiling, eyeing him narrowly, under the bushy eyebrows.

It suddenly occurred to the boy that Ben was looking remarkably well and wore better clothes than usual.

"Have yer thought about what I told yer?" said Ben in a loud whisper, bending toward the boy.

Without waiting for an answer, he opened the door of the drygoods store.

"Don't forget, Jimmie, don't forget," he whispered, and went into the store, leaving our hero



more puzzled than ever, by the air of mystery that accompanied the words.

When Jimmie told his father about it that evening, the man smiled, but he, too, was at a loss to know the meaning of Ben's words.

"I don't know what to make of the old man lately," said Jimmie's father. "I met him one day last week and he talked for twenty minutes about almost nothing, seemed as if he was trying to think up things to keep me a-talkin'. He told me he had sold his hens, all but a few, and he asked me what I intended to do with Jimmie this summer, and a lot o' useless questions. And all the time he was in great good humor, same as if he had something on his mind that he was trying hard to keep. He's not the snarling Ben he used to be, I can tell you."

"Poor old man," ventured Jimmie's mother; "perhaps that fire upset him and his mind is affected."

"Not a bit of it, mother," said John Suter quickly; "I'd say he was losing his mind, too, if I didn't know him to drive the shrewdest bargain I ever heard of, with Alec MacLeod only

day before yesterday. Oh, there's nothing wrong with Ben. He's probably hatching some big scheme."

Jimmie dismissed the subject from his mind. Indeed there were other matters of far more importance that took up his attention, among them the following notice:

**HASTEN! HURRY!! HIKE!!!**

**COME AND SEE PROFESSOR STEPTOE.**

**The Seventh Son of Big Moose Man.**

**A Full-blooded Indian Chief of the Onondaga  
Tribe.**

See his wonderful manifestations of black art.

Witness with your own eyes his marvelous power to heal the sick.

Science and the medical world stand aghast at Professor Steptoe's power to heal.

All is done by the aid of his own herb medicine:—

**STEPTOE'S SPRING TONIC.**

Every man, woman and child can secure a



bottle of Steptoe's Spring Tonic for a merely nominal price.

For one afternoon and one night only, will the people have the opportunity to see the Professor at the big tent to the left of Cedar Road.

Admission to the evening performance 15 cents. Read special notice to the youth of this town.

At the afternoon performance, Professor Steptoe will exhibit a bottle of beans. The boy who makes the nearest guess as to the correct number of beans in the bottle, will receive a prize of a complete baseball outfit.

Admission to the children's performance only 10 cents.

Begins at 2 sharp.

Jimmie had been standing in front of the above flaring poster reading with wide-eyed interest when someone nudged him in the elbow and he turned to meet Hank Allen.

"Are you going to try for the baseball outfit, Jimmie?" he asked, with a broad grin, his hands thrust deep in his pockets.

"I'd like to win it; wouldn't you?" laughed Jimmie.

Hank nodded. "I only wish I could raise the money to go to the show. Shad Wilber and I picked a lot o' rags and old nails, but the most we could raise on 'em was seven cents."

Jimmie was silent a minute and studied the poster again. Suddenly he turned to Hank and said with a smile:

"Let's see, the Indian show doesn't come here till next Friday; that will be during our vacation. Now, why couldn't you and I and some of the boys get up a show ourselves, and charge two cents admission. We'll have ours before the big Indian gets 'round."

Hank's grin disappeared, and an expression of the keenest interest spread over his good-natured countenance.

"Do yer think we could, Jimmie?"

"Of course we could; we'd do a few tricks and sing, and things like that, and divide the money."

"Where'd we have it, Jimmie?"

"Well, I was just thinking if Charlie Baxter's folks would let him have it in his barn; it would



be just the place—lots of room and easy to get at things.”

“Let’s go up there now and ask him,” cried Hank, eagerly.

They started at once, but were spared the trouble of going to Charlie’s house by meeting him on the way, and immediately they unfolded the great plan to give a show in the barn and divide the profits.

Charlie was delighted with the scheme. He was certain he could have the use of the barn, and immediately began to suggest a programme.

“There’ll be you and Hank and me,” he cried, turning to the originator of the show; “we’ll all act, and then let’s ask Johnny Moor—you know Johnny can make awful funny faces, he can nearly swallow his nose, and he can wiggle both ears.”

“Good!” cried Jimmie; “he can act the funny parts fine, and I believe I’ll write to Philip Moon and ask him over to help.”

“Now we’ll see what each one can act,” said Charlie. “In the first place Hank can give an exhibition of jumping.”

"The very thing!" cried Jimmie; "we'll have some hoops covered with paper and Hank can dive right through them; that will make it sort of interesting, and there'll be more fun in it than just plain jumping."

"I have an idea," said Charlie; "they are just taking out those cloth windows from my uncle's new house, before they put in the glass windows, you know; now I'll get five or six of those windows and some charcoal and draw funny pictures."

"That's good!" cried Jimmie, with enthusiasm. It was well known that Charlie had a natural talent for drawing, and his plan appealed to the boys at once.

"We'll make Johnny Moor sing a song with funny faces," said Charlie. "Now, Jimmie, what will you do?"

"I might whistle and stand on my head. Yes, I can walk a few steps on my hands."

"That'll do," said Charlie, in a business-like way, then turned to Hank, who had stood there grinning in open-mouthed wonder at the talents displayed by the local stage manager.



"What'll you do besides jump, Hank?"

"Don't know—might sing on a pinch, I s'pose," ventured Hank.

"Ah-h-h! you can't sing any more 'n a tom-cat," cried Charlie. "Think o' something else."

"Why not have one act where we'll all sing together," suggested Jimmie.

"Just what we'll do," said Charlie; and after a few more details the boys separated, having agreed to hold a meeting and a rehearsal the next day.

When Jimmie Suter reached home, he took several different-sized bottles and filled them with beans. Having done this, he sat down deliberately and proceeded to count the contents of each bottle.

It would give him an idea of the number of beans that might be put in ordinary bottles. He meant to try for the baseball outfit, if his mother would give him permission to attend the show.

That night he wrote a letter to Philip Moon telling him about the big Indian show and the boys' affair in Charlie Baxter's barn, inviting

Philip to take part, and thus help out. He was urged to attend the rehearsal, if possible.

Jimmie went to bed that night well pleased with the plans for the following week, the first week of April, and no school for ten days.



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE SHOW BUSINESS

THE following Tuesday afternoon, most of the boys and girls of Sunnyview could be seen wending their way to Charlie Baxter's.

The barn door had been opened just wide enough to allow Jimmie Suter to fill the space. He acted as doorkeeper and took the money. As each one paid his admission fee of two cents, Jimmie put the money in his pocket and stepped aside to allow the patron to enter.

When safely inside, Charlie Baxter, as chief usher, showed each one to a seat in front of a temporary stage, which was hidden from view by a Japanese curtain that could be raised or lowered at will.

When the audience was all seated, the curtain was raised, showing a window frame covered with cloth, arranged on a chair, easel-fashion.

A babble of voices and loud applause that greeted this scene ceased when Philip Moon

stepped to the center of the stage and began to speak.

Philip was a stranger to most of the boys and girls, and on this account was regarded with curiosity, and a certain amount of respect.

There was no knowing what feats he might perform, therefore they were silent and waited; but he merely made a low bow, and with his winning smile announced: "The first thing we'll show you at this performance will be some wonderful charcoal sketches by 'Professor Markem.'"

When Philip had disappeared behind a door that had been borrowed, and which served the purpose of stage exit, Charlie Baxter stepped on the stage, wearing false whiskers, very black and bushy, and a red handkerchief, knotted at the corners and twisted around his head.

The applause that greeted Charlie was deafening. Shouts and cheers rang through the barn, but "Professor Markem," apparently oblivious of it all, made his bow, and, with a flourish of his charcoal, began to sketch a funny face on the cloth window.



The hum of voices ceased as the audience watched Charlie's deft fingers making the picture. When it was finished to Charlie's satisfaction, he stepped aside, so that they might have a better view of the drawing. Having waited a second, he put this picture aside and placed another window on the chair, while all the time the shouts of approval and clapping of hands made a tremendous noise.

Then Charlie, or rather "Professor Markem," sketched the outlines of a donkey, to the delight of his audience, and afterwards added a rooster on the donkey's back, in the act of crowing.

His fourth and last sketch was that of a very fat baby with his fist in his mouth, looking as if he was crying lustily for "marmar."

When this was removed, Philip Moon once more appeared on the stage, and announced that "Professor Markem's" drawings would be followed by an exhibition given by "Daddy Long Legs."

For a moment there was silence, everybody wondering what he could mean; but when Hank Allen, with his long arms and legs shuffled onto

the stage, there was one prolonged yell. In fact it was so prolonged that Philip Moon had to reappear and strike three times for order. He requested his audience, politely but firmly, to stop the shouting and allow Hank to proceed. At the last word he produced a hoop covered with paper, and held it at arm's length. Quiet was restored at the sight and Hank made a dive head first through the paper hoop.

Then another hoop was held horizontally and "Daddy Long Legs" jumped, landing on his feet. Again a hoop was placed between two chairs and Hank, after jumping into it, walked off the stage with the paper hoop around his waist.

Jimmie Suter appeared next and he received a tremendous ovation. He stood on his head and walked a short distance on his hands, which act called forth the wildest approval from the small boys; but when he tried to warble after this exhibition, he was rather short of breath and the curtain was lowered for an intermission.

Again the applause became so noisy that the



curtain was raised and Philip suddenly appeared holding a small bottle filled with beans.

"Now," said Philip, "who ever guesses the correct number of beans in this bottle, or the nearest to it, gets a prize. Jimmie Suter has counted them. Come, now, who is ready?"

"I guess forty," said a little boy in the front row with a grin on his childish face.

He was greeted with hisses and cries of "better learn to count;" "make him eat forty;" etc., etc.

"I guess three hundred and fifty," cried Susie Hibbard, jumping to her feet.

"I guess four hundred," came from Minnie Day.

"Two hundred, I guess two hundred," cried Willie Burns.

"Willie gets the prize," said Philip. "There's just two hundred and fifteen beans in that bottle."

All eyes were riveted on Willie, as he walked up for the prize, which was neatly tied up in brown paper.

"Open it, Willie, open it," cried the audience, impatiently.

Willie, his face one broad smile, began to untie the package, and when at last after various papers had been removed he drew forth a Frankfurt sausage, a yell went up from every boy present, and pandemonium reigned in the barn.

Philip Moon presented the bottle of beans to Willie, and the "show" continued.

But the bean contest was the one great mistake of the affair, as the "actors" afterwards admitted.

There was something about the bottle of beans and the Frankfurt that lessened the dignity of the whole performance. The boys refused to take the rest of the show seriously.

In vain the actors appeared in line and sang a verse of "Dixie." When Johnny Moor began to make funny faces and wiggle his ears, as he had been told to, beans were flying in all directions. The actors were kept busy dodging the beans. Charlie Baxter got "mad" and shook his fist at the audience. He tried to speak; when a piece of sausage, sent flying over the heads of the audience, landed squarely in his mouth. Roars of laughter followed, with cheers and shouts of



derision, which made the very rafters tremble. The girls, headed by Susie Hibbard, deeply offended at this turn of affairs, started to leave the barn, but they were obliged to dodge beans and pieces of sausage, so they took their seats again for safety.

Jimmie Suter was the first to realize that the affair was spoiled, and the only thing to do was to make the best of it. He whispered his thoughts to the others and the next minute the actors laughed with the audience, jumped from the stage and joined in the fun.

The barn door was opened wide and the crowd of hooting, yelling boys pitched (some of them head foremost) into the yard. The show was over.

When the money was counted, the boys found they had sixty cents, which was divided equally among the "actors"; and Hank Allen was joyful beyond expression, because he had made enough money to go to the big Indian show on Friday.

Although a little disappointed in the way the show turned out at the end, they were highly

pleased with it as a whole, and determined to have one again some time, omitting the bean contest.

It is no new thing for boys of a certain age to get up a "show." In every neighborhood where there are live boys the plan to have a "show" comes sooner or later.

There is always an actor in embryo, a local stage manager, and a celebrity of some kind, to call into play. The show is planned days, and sometimes weeks, ahead, is finally put on the boards amid great rejoicing; and then passes away like the day before yesterday.

But the remembrance of many a "show" is carried far into the years and causes a smile and a bit of heartache, too, when other boyish pranks are quite forgotten.

In one of his inimitable touches of boy-life, our beloved "Hoosier Poet," brings out the real "show" spirit:

"Wasn't it a good time  
Long time ago  
When we all were little tads  
And first played 'show'—



When every newer day  
Wore as bright a glow  
As the ones we laughed away—  
Long time ago!

"Calf was in the back-lot  
Clover in the red;  
Blue bird in the pear-tree;  
Pigeons on the shed;  
Tom a-chargin' twenty pins  
At the barn; and Dan  
Spraddled out just like 'The  
Injarubber-man'!

"Me and Bub and Rusty  
Eck and Dunk and Sid  
'Tumblin' on the saw-dust  
Like the A-rabs did;  
Jamesy on the slack-rope  
In a wild retreat  
Grappling back to start again  
When he chalked his feet!

"Wasn't Eck a wonder  
In his stocking tights?  
Wasn't Dunk—his leaping lion—  
Chief of all delights?  
Yes, and wasn't 'Little Mack'  
Boss of all the show—  
Both Old Clown and Candy-Butcher  
Long time ago.

“ Sid the Bareback-Rider ;  
And—oh-me—oh-my !—  
But, the spruce Ringmaster,  
Stepping round so spry !—  
In his little waist and trousers  
All made in one  
Was there a prouder youngster  
Under the sun !

“ And now—who will tell me,—  
Where are they all ?  
Dunk’s a sanatorium doctor  
Up at Waterfall ;  
Sid’s a city street-contractor ;  
Tom has fifty clerks,  
And Jamesy he’s the ‘ Iron Magnate ’  
Of ‘ The Hecla Works. ’

“ And Bub’s old and bald now  
Yet still he hangs on,  
Dan and Eck and ‘ Little Mack ’  
Long, long gone !  
But wasn’t it a good time  
Long time ago,  
When we all were little tads  
And first played ‘ show. ’ ”

But to return to the “ Show business ! ”

The day before the Indian exhibition took place, Jimmie Suter spent a good part of the



morning counting the contents of various-sized bottles, filled with beans. When he had finished his tedious task, he felt in a measure, that he was fairly competent to pass judgment on the number of beans in any ordinary bottle.

He called in to see Charlie Baxter, on his way home from the postoffice that afternoon, and found Charlie sitting on the barn floor, Turkish fashion, with at least a dozen bottles of different sizes before him, also counting beans.

Jimmie decided with a grin that he would not disturb Charlie's mathematical calculations, and sought Hank Allen, only to find Hank on the back porch, deep in the bean and bottle problem.

It is safe to assume that every boy in Sunnyview that afternoon, who could count his ten fingers, had a bottle of beans in front of him, with visions of a good Indian hovering in the background, dispensing baseball outfits.

But the day came at last, that ushered in the big show. It is not my purpose in this chapter to tell you about Professor Steptoe's wonderful performance.

The town turned out in goodly numbers,

to witness the black art tricks, and to listen (which was by far the main part of the show) to the flowery eloquence of the Professor, in describing the wonderful powers of Steptoe's Spring Tonic.

Many of the worthy people (by parting with a little good money) were "made a present" of the almost miraculous bottle. Who would refuse such a gift? A bottle that was guaranteed to cure all the ills to which flesh is heir, beside a few that might happen in an electrical age!

At the close of the children's performance, the Professor brought out an immense glass cylinder filled with beans.

The boys were taken aback when they saw it. They expected an ordinary-sized bottle, and the great glass cylinder upset all their calculations.

When the guessing began it went wildly for a time, and at last the smiling Professor, with many expressions of regret, told them that as no one came within even a reasonable figure of the contents, he felt that no one was entitled to the prize.

At this announcement, it appeared that some



of the boys thought they had not received fair play. Murmurs of "cheating" and "skin game," gave place to a noisy demonstration.

At last hisses and yells broke forth, and in the midst of the confusion, the sides of the tent were suddenly raised and several Indians (?) in war-paint and feathers, armed with tomahawks, told the boys to "clear out and git home out o' here, the whole lot o' yer."

There was much indignation and disappointment among the boys over the affair, and they were standing in a group outside the grocery store, talking it over, Charlie Baxter's voice raised the loudest in protest, when his uncle appeared.

"What's the matter, Charlie?" asked the smiling grocer, "what's it all about?" Whereupon Charlie related the whole affair to his sympathizing relative; but when he had finished, his uncle gave him a prolonged wink, and sang as he stepped inside,—“Put not your trust in the medicine man,” a remark that some of the boys never forgot.

## CHAPTER XX

### BEN'S PROPOSITION

"JIMMIE, you may go up to Ben Ridgeway's to-day, he wants to see you," said John Suter, one morning just after breakfast.

"Wants to see me?" asked Jimmie, in surprised tones. "I wonder what it all means; the day before yesterday, he was standing on the steps of the post office, and when I came out he slapped me on the shoulder and said, 'Have you thought about what I've said to you?' Now, the queer part of it is," Jimmie went on, "he hasn't said a single word that I can make sense out of. —I haven't the least idea what he's been driving at by his mysterious words. It's all a riddle to me."

"Well, you had better go up there this morning," said the man, with a smile, "and let him read the riddle."

"Have you any idea, father, what he wants to see me about?"



For answer, his father's smile deepened, but he only said:—

“You run along up there and find out for yourself.”

When our hero's chores were done, he lost no time in starting for Ben's place, taking the short cut through the woods; after he had paddled up the marsh brook in his canoe.

It was now almost the middle of May, and all the fields and woods breathed of Summer. The leaves on tree and bush had taken on a deeper green, the grass looked a season old in many places. A robin darted past Jimmie as he went along, and perched on a bush just ahead. In a second he was joined by his mate, who looked at Jimmie boldly, as much as to say, “This is our woods, what is your business here?” Jimmie passed a swampy part of the woods and saw violets in large numbers, hidden under their broad leaves. He came across the same flower again, in a dryer place, growing not nearly so tall, under a group of pine trees.

Reaching one of the winter “feeding posts,” he met a flock of small birds, a big blue-jay in

their midst, making a great outcry at his approach.

But Jimmie Suter did not heed the signs of life about him very much that morning. He was hurrying on his way with rapid strides, wondering, as he went, what Ben wanted to see him for. As he walked on, he could not help thinking, now and then, of the joyful summer so near at hand, and the good times he would have in the long vacation.

He wished he could do something "worth while" the coming summer, he told himself; something a little out of the ordinary. He wanted to have a real good time, and the thought came to him that he would like to earn some money, too. It must be fine, thought Jimmie, to do real work and earn money. It must be fine to do ever so many things. To camp out for instance, that must be the very acme of a good time, jolliest of all good times.

In the midst of his thoughts, Ben's new cottage came into view, and just beyond he could see the blue waters of the lake, glistening in the sunshine.



Jimmie did not know why the odor of the pines was more delicious in the vicinity of Ben Ridgeway's shanties than anywhere else. He only knew that it was a fact. The subtle chemistry of the sunshine, the water, and the pines, made one stop to take a deeper breath; and Jimmie, boy that he was, stood for a second and drank in the perfume.

Then he hurried on, and having reached Ben's door, knocked timidly and waited.

"Come in, Jimmie, come in," said Ben, in the cheeriest voice, opening the door. "I've been expecting yer, all the mornin'."

He motioned Jimmie to a chair, and seating himself on the end of an old lounge, smiled at the boy, till his small eyes narrowed to mere slits under the bushy eyebrows.

"Now, I suppose you've been a-thinkin' and a-wonderin' what on airth an old man like me 'ud want of a boy like you—an' I'm a-goin' to tell yer. I'm a goin' ter tell yer the hull story, because you're one boy in a thousand, ay, Jimmie, I think yer one boy in ten thousand. You've got an honest father and mother, an' I trust 'em,

an' it's because I know yer to be honest, that I'm a-goin' ter tell yer, what I'm goin' ter do."

The old man paused for a moment, but Jimmie only sat there looking at Ben in silence; his curiosity aroused more than ever, by this preamble.

"You've always thought I was a poor man, didn't yer?" asked Ben suddenly.

He waited a moment, while Jimmie, more puzzled than ever, did not know just what to say.

"And I thought so myself till jest about a month ago," continued Ben; "but now I tell yer I'm rich—rich," he repeated in a lower tone, looking cautiously for a second toward the door.

"He—he—he," he chuckled softly to himself, "it's a big surprise, Jimmie, an' I'm goin' ter tell you all about it.

"I wasn't born in this country, as perhaps yer know. I was born on the Island of Jersey, in the English Channel. It's so long ago since I left the old place that I'd 'most forgotten about it; when one day, 'bout a month ago, I got a letter



with a foreign postmark on it. When I opened that letter I remembered Jersey, but before I tell yer about that letter, I must tell yer 'bout Susan. She was my sister (there was only the two of us), and when the Crimean war broke out, she went as a nurse in the English army. A fine woman too, was Susan, but had a will of her own. Well, she was there all through the war and earned the Victoria Cross. That means a big thing to an Englishman, Jimmie, it's something to be proud of, I can tell yer. Well, she came back to Jersey when the war was over and married. It's over forty year since I set eyes on her.

"But it seems she married pretty well, and she had something laid by on her own account, beside, and in course o' time, her husband died, and left her a childless widow, with a tidy fortune.

"Well, ter make a short story, Susan up and died a short time ago, an' left it all to me. I didn't tell yer that 'bout a year ago, we wrote to each other for a spell. But she never so much as hinted that she was worth a dollar."

Ben chuckled again, while Jimmie wondered, in silence, what all this had to do with him.

“An’ she died an’ left all her money and property to me,” Ben went on. “It’s a matter o’ some eighty thousand dollars. Think o’ that. An’ no one in the place knows a word of it; but the letter came from the lawyers over there, an’ I’m a-goin’ over the first o’ June to see for myself and settle things up.

“It’s quite a trip across, for a man o’ my years, but I’m strong an’ hearty as a man o’ forty. At any rate, I got to go, Jimmie, an’ I’ve wanted to tell you the whole story.

“When I come back I may build a sightly place; I don’t know yet, but it’s a pile o’ money, lad, a pile o’ money. Ain’t it, now, Jimmie,” he said smiling, “a pretty big fortune for a man at my time o’ life?”

“Yes, sir, it’s a great deal of money,” replied the boy, still waiting to hear in what way Ben’s change of fortune concerned himself.

“And now, Jimmie, I’ve got a proposition to make, for you’re the very one that’s goin’ to help me in this matter,” said Ben.



For a second it flashed through the boy's mind that the old man wanted to take him along on the journey, but he was quickly undeceived on this point.

"I'm a-goin' ter start for Europe, the first of June, and I want you to take care of my place here, till I come back.

"I've sold 'most all the hens; there's a few that'll keep you in fresh eggs, for their care; the pigeons, too, are all here, to be looked after; but what I had in mind was this:

"I'll be away all summer and mebbe longer, perhaps for months. You've got a long vacation and yer a boy that likes ter do things an' hustle for yourself. Now, I thought if you'd keep an eye on this place till school closes, then you could come right up here and live here for the summer. It's a fine place for a boy like you, Jimmie; there's good boatin' and fishin' in the lake and it's splendid over there in the pine woods on a hot day. I'll leave all my things an' yer can make whatever you've a mind to, boats an' sheds or anything. Perhaps that Cotter chap might come up here, or a couple o' other

good boys, an' keep yer company. Have any one yer like up here, I know you're a good boy an' keep good comp'ny, so I trust yer.

"You can do what yer like, use my stuff an' welcome, only watch out for fires, an' don't allow Shad Wilber, or any hoodlums near the place. Besides all the fun you'll git out of it, I'll pay you a dollar a week to look after things and keep the place right, till I come back. Now what do you say Jimmie—is it a bargain?"

Jimmie, who had received this surprising offer, with mingled emotions, did not answer for a second. Joy at the prospect Ben had just put before him, and fear lest he could not accept, filled his thoughts.

"I shall have to ask my father first," said Jimmie; "then I can tell you."

"If that's all, my lad, yer needn't worry; your father knows all about it. I told him the whole thing yesterday, and he's the only one beside yourself that knows a thing about it."

"But what did he say?" asked Jimmie, eagerly. "Did he say I could come up here and camp with the other boys and all that?"



"He said he'd give his consent willingly; he thought it would be a pleasant way to spend your vacation, and if you wanted to take my offer, he'd see that everything was right."

"Then, I'll do it," cried Jimmie, joyfully. "I'll watch your place, as well as I can, till school closes; then I'll come up here and camp out for the summer."

"That'll suit me first-rate, Jimmie; an' now," said Ben, rising from the lounge, "I've got to cut your visit short, as I've got some business to do in Northwood."

Jimmie arose quickly and started for the door. He had his hand on the latch, when Ben touched him on the shoulder.

"An' you'll never be sorry, Jimmie, for doing this favor for me, I promise yer."

"I'll take good care of your place sir;" and with these words, Jimmie opened the door and started for home.

When once in the quiet of the woodland path, our hero began to go over, in his mind, Ben's proposition.

In the first place, he would write at once to

Rand and tell him the whole plan. He was just the boy to appreciate the splendid fun of camping in Ben's old place for the summer.

Then too, perhaps Philip Moon could join them. They both enjoyed his company; and if the three of them could live up there by the lake and the pine woods, care for the few hens and pigeons (those tumblers were already an object of the keenest interest to Jim), if they could really camp out, do their own cooking, fish and swim in the lake, live in the open; what a glorious summer they would have!

Jimmie's feet seemed winged as he flew over the ground and reached the spot where his canoe was anchored. He got in as quickly as possible and paddled down the marsh brook for home.



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE CAMP

"THERE! I think I've got everything now," said Jimmie, placing a large package wrapped in brown paper on the buckboard that stood at his back door, and was already pretty well filled with various-sized bundles and boxes.

"That buckboard comes in handy, doesn't it?" said Philip, helping to pack some of the bundles nearer together.

"I can tell you it does," was the answer. "I didn't know when I was making it that it would be so useful."

Philip Moon had come over, early in the day, to help Jimmie carry some things to Ben Ridgeway's, as the boys were getting ready to move into their summer quarters.

"Now, let me see, Jimmie," said the boy's mother, coming to the door and casting her eyes

over the furniture on the buckboard. "You've got the bed linen and those towels I left out for you, but I don't see the blankets."

"Here they are, in these newspapers," cried Philip.

"And the dishes?"

"All safe, mother, in that small tub, and there are the books, and my rubber boots, and the small things are in the white box."

"Then I think you are ready to move," and she smiled at the boys as they started to draw the buckboard away from the door.

"Rand will be there before us, I think," said Jimmie, as they turned into the road. "The train gets in shortly after ten, and he's going straight to Ben's place from the depot."

"I wish we were going to begin camping to-day," said Philip; "it's too bad we've got to wait a whole week."

"Oh, well, school doesn't close until next Friday," said Jim, "and my father thinks we would better not begin camping up there until the following Monday; but it will be a good start to get all these things up there and the place straight-



ened out a bit before we begin, don't you think so?"

"Oh, yes, I was going over there to-day, anyway, to have a look at my beans," said Philip; "if we want vegetables by-and-by, I must do a bit of weeding now and then."

A small garden patch, back of Ben Ridgeway's barn, had been appropriated by Philip the first time he saw it, to plant some vegetables in for the camp.

"Do you realize that we are really going to live up there this summer?" asked Jimmie suddenly, stopping a moment in the middle of the road to rest.

"I don't think I do, yet," said Philip, with a smile. "My father says that on some windy night we'll all be blown clear across the lake, or else we'll wake up some morning drenched to the skin."

"He'll find himself mistaken about that," laughed Jimmie. "The place is water-tight; my father made sure of that, and if the foundation is strong enough to stand winter storms, I'm very sure it will be safe for the summer."

“Oh, of course, I know father’s joking about it,” said Philip. “He’s been saying ever so many funny things, since he gave me permission to camp with you and Rand. Do you know, Jimmie, my father just loves to play tricks on me. We have lots of good times together, father and I. Why, when we’re in for a good time, I never think of father as a big, grown-up man; he seems just like one of us; and, say, Jimmie, when my father goes off on a trip (you know he has to go at times, in his business), I feel just as lonesome; seems as if my chum had gone, instead of my father.”

Jimmie smiled at Philip’s compliment to his father, but what a splendid compliment it was! Perhaps it accounted for Philip’s bright, lovable, trusting nature. If more fathers were “chums” for their boys, I think we would have better boys and—better fathers.

The boys continued on their way, but after a short time Philip wanted to rest.

“This is a pretty good load, you know; it makes my back ache, and seems to get heavier as we go along.”



"Don't give up yet," laughed Jimmie, who had been working so hard that beads of perspiration stood on his forehead. "We'll be there inside of half an hour."

They trudged on in silence for the next fifteen minutes, stopping again when a farmer, driving toward the town, drew in his horses and saluted them.

"Could you tell me," he asked, "what's become o' Ben Ridgeway, that used to live up there by the lake?"

"He's gone to Europe, sir," said Jimmie; "he started the first of the month."

"I want ter know! Mebbe you could tell me who is livin' on his place up there?"

"Well, we're going to live there," cried Jimmie. "We're moving in now," he added, with a smile.

"Are your folks goin' ter run his poultry farm?" asked the man, supposing it was the boy's parents who were moving into Ben's place.

"No, sir, Ben sold most of his hens before he went away."

The farmer continued on his way, leaving Jim-

mie and Philip still resting in the road; but they did not stay there long, and in a very short time had made such progress that they could see the lake sparkling in the sunlight ahead, and they knew their journey was almost ended.

"You fellows are slow!" rang out a voice, as they neared Ben's place. "I've been waiting so long, I thought you must have got lost."

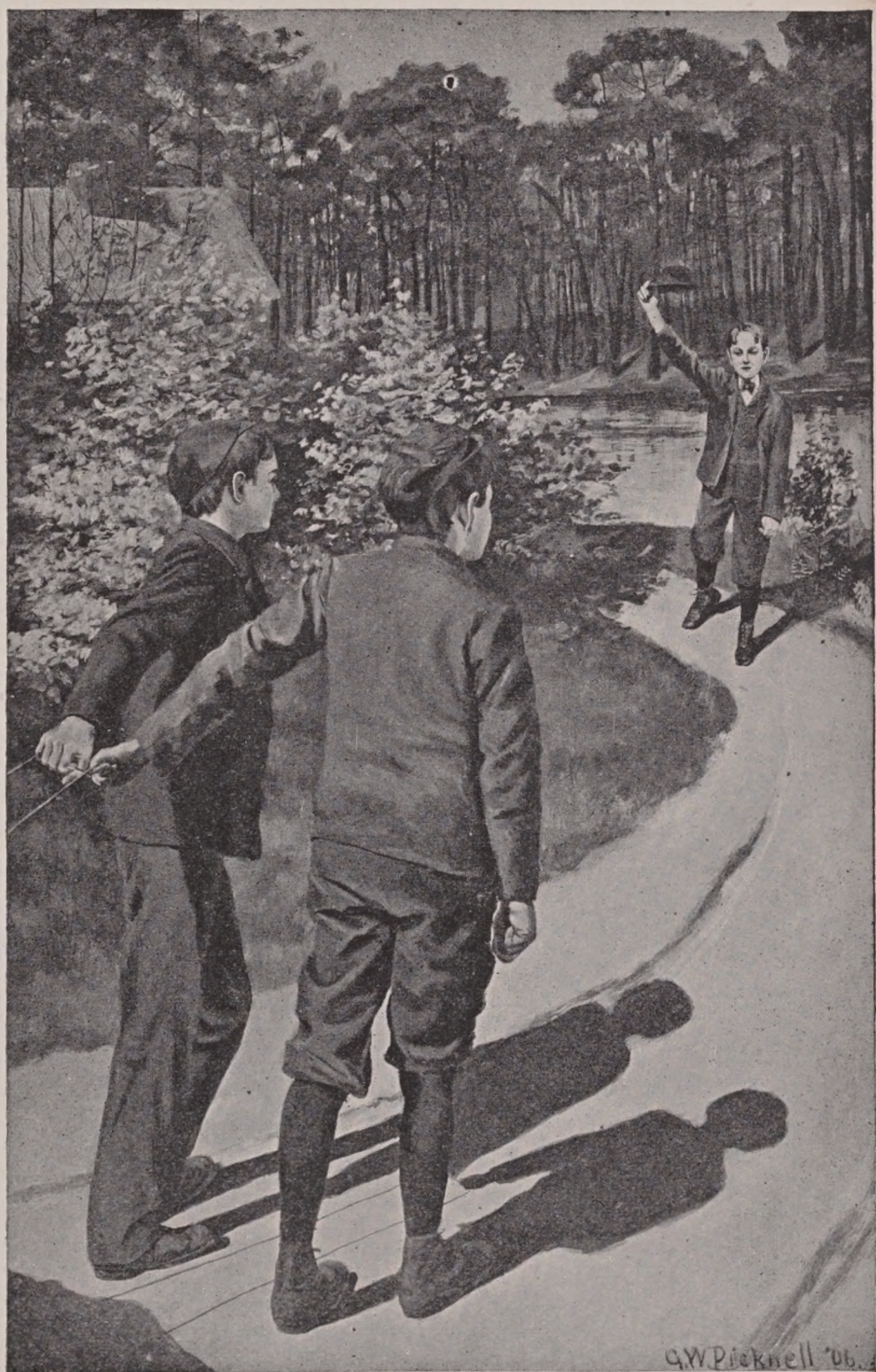
"You wouldn't be very fast, if you had to drag this load as far as we have," said Philip and Jim in one breath when Rand Cotter appeared before them, looking very well, indeed, in a new suit of clothes.

Rand always dressed well, but to-day he looked smarter than ever. Perhaps it was the contrast with Jimmie in his old working-clothes, dingy with the dust of the road.

"Did you meet my father, on the way?" asked Rand. And when the boys replied in the negative he seemed surprised.

"He has driven over to the house, but is coming back for me later; and now before you open the door," continued Rand, as Jimmie took the keys of the cottage from his pocket, "just come





“You fellows are slow!” rang out a voice, as they neared Ben’s place. — Page 242.





over here a minute. I want to show you something."

He walked back of the house toward the lake, followed by the other boys; but they had taken only a few steps when they stood as if rooted to the spot, for there, on the border of the lake, was a fine new tent all ready for them.

"Pretty good-looking place to camp in for a while, isn't it?" said Rand, enjoying the surprise of his friends.

"Why, I don't understand," began Jimmie. "When was it placed there? I was up here yesterday, and there wasn't a sign of it."

"Well," said Rand, smiling, "it must have dropped there during the night. The fact is, however, it was put up this morning by some men that father sent out here for that purpose."

When the boys had gone over every square inch, as it were, of their fine camp, they went back to the buckboard and began to move their belongings into the house.

With three pairs of hands at work, it did not take very long. Then they fed the hens and pigeons that Ben had left in their care, and

looked over Philip's garden, while he explained about the beds he had laid out and his plans for the coming weeks. The boat and boat-landing were visited next, and the boys decided to row across to the pine woods after lunch. As they walked back to the house, taking a general survey of the place, Rand said suddenly:

"Say, boys, if we're going to camp here for the summer, we must give this place a name. It isn't Ben's shanty any longer, at least not for some months; it's ours now. Come, Philip; come, Jimmie, put on your thinking caps and find a good name for our new camp."

"I think that's your specialty," returned Philip. "Suppose you start."

"Go ahead, Rand; you're the one for names," said Jimmie.

"Let's see," said Rand, seating himself on a smooth stone. "There's scores of names we could use. I'm a little tired of Indian names. We might make one up from our own names."

Just then a flock of pigeons, among them Ben's famous tumblers, circled over their heads and flew into the yard, almost at Jimmie's feet.



They knew their keeper of the past weeks, and were very tame with him. They walked about in a stately way for a minute, and then, of a sudden, fluttered to the loft almost overhead.

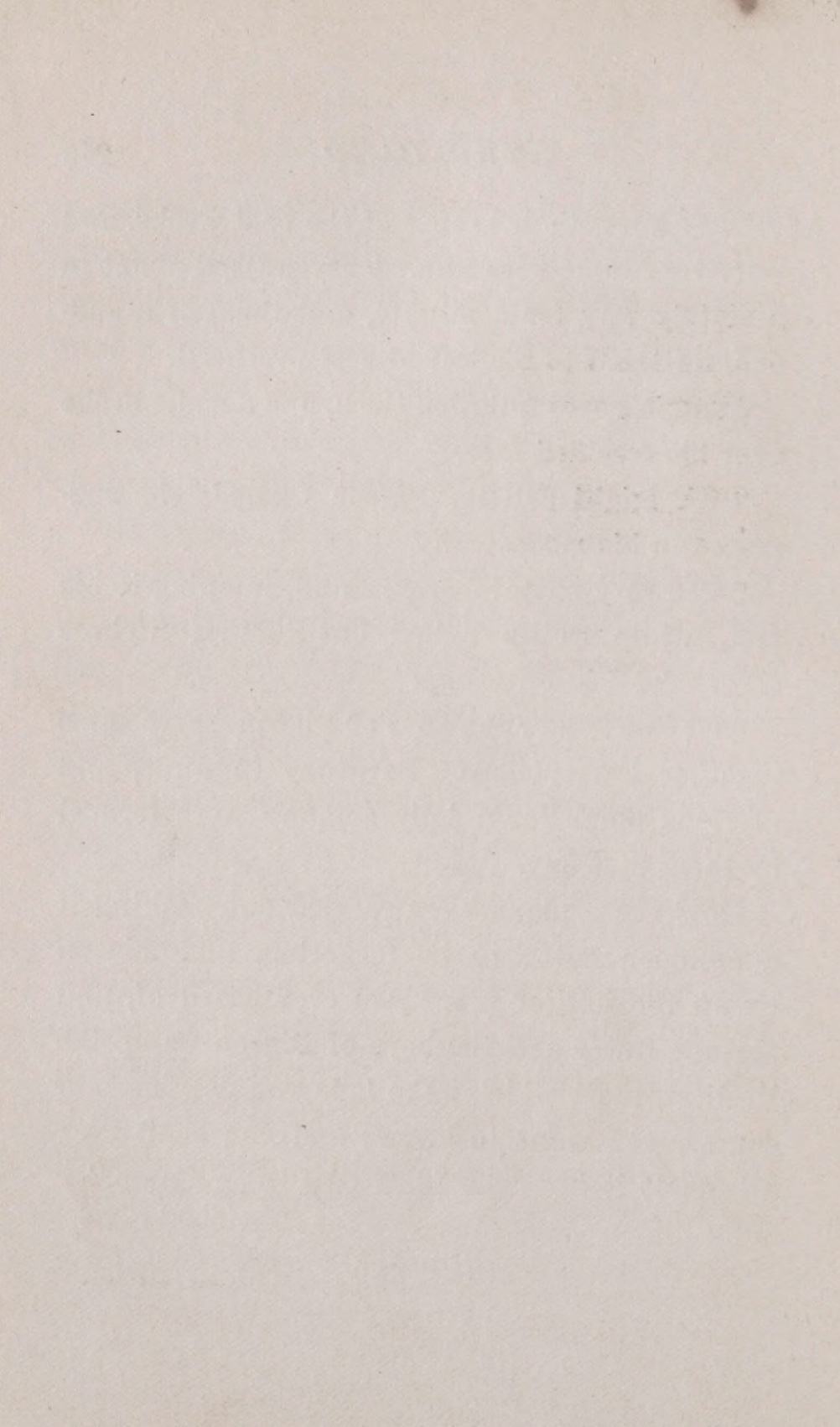
Jimmie's eyes followed them, and a smile broke over his freckled face.

"We might call it 'Pigeon Camp,' " he suggested in his modest way.

"The very name!" cried Rand, jumping to his feet, while Philip called out lustily, "Three cheers for Pigeon Camp."

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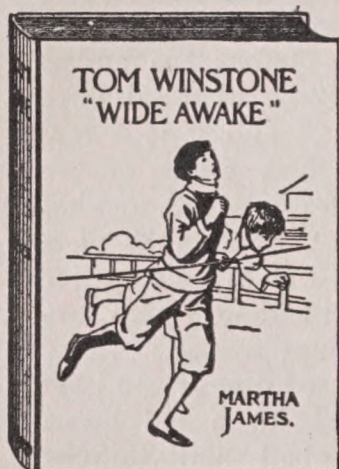


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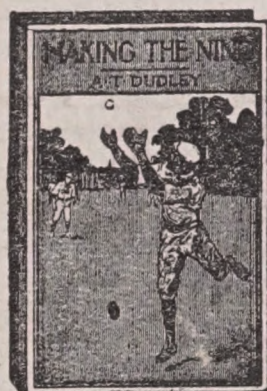
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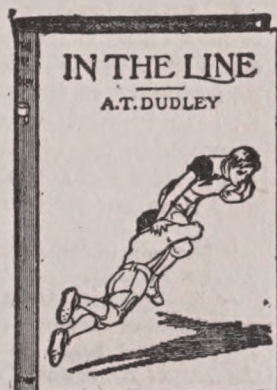
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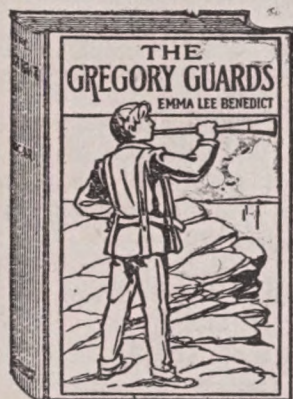
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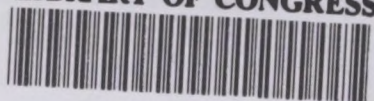
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